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THE TWINS:

OR

CONVERSATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE

OF THE OFFICE OF THE

RULING ELDER:

ITS SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY, QUALIFICATIONS, AND DUTIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF WHY AM I A PRESBYTERIAN?

R. W. Campbell

Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour. 1 *Tim.* v. 17.—He that ruleth, with diligence. *Rom.* xii. 18.

PHILADELPHIA:

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CONTENTS.

Page.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory 13

CHAPTER II.

Importance of the Eldership 29

CHAPTER III.

Scriptural authority for the Eldership 45

CHAPTER IV.

Authority continued 62

CHAPTER V.

Duties of the Eldership 77

CHAPTER VI.

Duties continued 98

CHAPTER VII.

Qualifications for the Eldership 118

CHAPTER VIII.

Election and Ordination of Elders 135

CHAPTER IX.

Encouragements of Elders 149

CHAPTER X.

Claims of the Eldership on Church Members 164

PREFACE.

As my little book on the Pastoral office has appeared before the public, and received a flattering notice, the present work on the Eldership seems a suitable companion for it; the two classes of presbyters being so intimately connected in the polity of our Church, that the one cannot put forth its full energy unless sustained and aided by the other. When united, these church-officers form a whole of such surpassing agreement and power, as would, if properly carried out, supply a mode

of ecclesiastical government equally efficient and impartial. It is much to be lamented, that this office is not "magnified" as its importance demands. If its scriptural warrant be denied, the foundation for its authority is at once swept away; nor does the substitution of expediency at all relieve the difficulty. Some persons advocate a rotation in the eldership, while others regard its existence as an evil necessary to the system, of which the great recommendation is, that the organization is a harmless one. How far is this from the estimation in which this class was held by the apostle! How different to the view which a consistent Presbyterian entertains, of those "whom the Holy Ghost hath made overseers of the Church of God!" Let not, then,

the subject be deemed uninteresting to private Christians; they are much concerned in the right discharge of this important trust, and the elders who perform their duties ought ever to be "esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake," by the people among whom they labour. If it be urged, that elders do not always perform their functions with becoming diligence and zeal, the allegation, if true, does not exonerate the Church from the charge of having lightly esteemed them whom inspiration commands us to honour; nor can a better way be discovered, of elevating and encouraging a session, in their feelings and endeavours, than in rendering that respect to their office which its importance demands.

There are many church members,

too, who must be aware that they have —often at the suggestions of worldly policy, or selfish aggrandizement—resisted alike the wishes of the church and the promptings of their own conscience, when solicited to accept the office in question. Perhaps an inquiry into its authority and duties will show them, how wrong it is to withhold more than is meet, when demanded for the Lord's service; and to such, the fact that the elder is of essential service to the pastor, will peradventure assist them in forming a more correct estimate of the responsibility they assume, in standing back when invited to this honourable post.

But, to return to the claims of the eldership; if it be admitted that government is necessary in ecclesiastical,

as well as political matters, then must the subjects of it submit to its salutary restraints, uphold its just authority, and reverence its accredited officers. Do private Christians pray for, encourage, and submit to "those that are over them in the Lord," as they ought? Will they avoid the prayer-meeting, where *only the elders* are to officiate? And can they complacently lay all the blame on the inefficiency or supineness of the session, without considering whether they have done their part of the work?

The author requests the attention of her readers to what is said in these pages on the subject of contribution of substance, and the plan of making this available by means of the elder. This branch of divine truth has too often

been overlooked by those who are loud in their professions of self-dedication and love to the Redeemer. Let such see to it, that their actions do not contravene their words; rather may they imitate "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

Free use has been made, in the course of this work, of Dr. King's book on the Eldership, the first of the Essays on the Primitive Church Offices, and Dr. Miller's Treatise on the Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder. The present series will be concluded by another set of conversations, to be called "The Missionaries," which will bring to a close the history of the Harcourt and Lindsay

families, and complete the intentions of the author as contemplated at the commencement of their story.

N. W. CAMPBELL.

MAPLE GROVE, *April 23d*, 1854.

THE TWINS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

Again is the honeysuckle-shaded piazza of Violet Vale recalled to the recollection of those readers who are familiar with the previous portions of Herbert and Mabel's history; and it is so, for this simple reason, that the author feels more at home there than in any other spot in Fancy-land that her imagination ever visited. It is occupied by a group who are conversing earnestly, and may therefore be scrutinized a little, without disturbance. First, as becomes her age and importance, the eye rests on a neat elderly lady, who occupies a large and comfortable rocking-chair; her widow's weeds,

snow white locks, and bright expression of countenance, at once remind one of Mrs. Lindsay; or, if any doubt existed of that fact, the close proximity of little Ellen—now a sweet child of six years old—settles the question. Harcourt, two years younger than his sister, is playing with a little girl just able to walk; while Mabel, more matronly, it is true, than in former times, but not less pleasing in her appearance, watches every movement of her children, though talking with Edith, who, with her husband and child, is on a visit at her sister's happy home.

"I thought," continued the younger lady, as she kissed the infant on her lap, "that as you had an Edith, I must return the compliment by calling my boy Herbert, and only hope he may prove as good a man as his uncle is. But I have so much to say, that I hardly know where to begin. First, I must tell you that I want your husband to give Mr. Neville some advice as to his duty in a particular case; and also some instruction as regards the duties and qualifications for a ruling elder; as he has been solicited to

assume that office in the church. I cannot convince him that he is fitted for it, but perhaps Herbert's arguments may have as good an effect on him as they had on Edwin, about the ministry. And then, aunt, I want your advice about our daughters—I mean Mr. Neville's twins by his first wife—who have always lived with their mother's relations, but ought, I am sure, to come home to us as soon as possible. Do you not think so, Mabel?"

"Indeed I do," replied her sister; "though I own, I rejoice that such a trial did not fall to my lot, as to have step-children. My own I can bear with; but how I should do my duty to other people's, I am not so sure about."

"I hope," said Mrs. Lindsay, "that had such been your lot, you would have been strengthened to fulfil it; but, no doubt, a step-mother's is generally a thankless office. Your resolution, Edith, is highly commendable, and I should advise, that as speedily as possible, it be put in execution; as the longer the children are estranged

from you, the harder will it be to counteract the injudicious indulgence they have been accustomed to. How happened it, that they have never been relinquished to you before?"

"Why, their mother exacted a promise from my poor husband, that their grandmother should keep them as long as she lived; and since her death, the aunt has not been willing to give them up: but, counting on your acquiescence, I have persuaded Mr. Neville to send for them to meet us here, and this in the hope, that love to their father and the baby might so far counterbalance all their aunt's petting, as to induce them to return with us, of their own accord."

"An excellent idea, sister; I hope it may succeed, and will do all in my power to promote your plan. When will they arrive?"

"Not for two or three days; so I shall have time to get some help from my aunt about my conduct towards them, and enjoy your society, without the restriction of their presence. I pray to be fitted to discharge

my duty to these children, but I fear my part will be a hard one, as there has been no religious influence around them, and I fear their prejudices against me are of the strongest kind."

"What infatuation, then," said Mrs. Lindsay, "prompted their father to allow of their remaining in such a situation?"

"I think, aunt, it proceeded from a mingled motive. He was not a professor of religion when he was married, and as his wife's family were opposed to any thing like vital godliness, a coolness ensued when Neville and she were united to the church. A reconciliation took place before her death, when their mother gave them, as I told you, to their grandmother. Soon after our wedding, I proposed that the children should come home; but he was unwilling to take them from his sister-in-law in her affliction, and thought also that the task would be too hard for me. I was too conscious of my deficiency of judgment to insist upon the matter, till the birth of my own baby woke

me to a sense of parental duty to these motherless ones."

"May that same feeling be deepened and directed, my dear niece!" returned her aunt. "Many are the mistakes made by those who sustain a relation, which, if well understood, gives the poor bereaved child the best substitute for the parent it has lost. Even conscientious women often err, from the fear of censure, a desire to please officious friends, or an idea that the discipline they adopt for their own family may be deemed too harsh if extended to their step-children. Nor is this all; the poor motherless ones often suffer from imprudent indulgence previously to their being brought to their new parent. The injudicious suggestions of friends or servants will frequently poison the youthful mind, and introduce those hateful passions which should never find admittance there, and which destroy the happiness of home in so many families. But here comes the gentlemen, and poor Harcourt has fallen down, in his attempt to outrun his sister in

their usual contest to get the first kiss from their father."

Peace being restored, and the party all seated, Edith turned to her husband, and said, "I have been bespeaking Herbert's instructions for you about the eldership, and hope he will convince you that it is your duty to accept of it."

"You have indeed been early in your application, my good wife," returned Mr. Neville; "and I desire to be open to conviction on the subject, though I feel as if my objections are unanswerable."

"What are they?" inquired Herbert, "for it should not be a trifling one, that can deter you from the path of duty."

"There it is—I do not find in myself that fitness for the office, without which it cannot be right to undertake it. And then old men—as the very name imports—are the proper persons for distributing the elements of the Christian passover."

"Hold, my good brother! that short speech of yours is replete with error. The Church wants young men in her judicatories,

her public efforts, and her intercourse with her own members, and the handing round the bread and wine, by no means covers the whole province of an elder's functions. As for qualifications, others must think differently from yourself, or you would not be put in the nomination for the office."

"Even if you are right on the other points, Herbert, I am too much immersed in business, too entirely devoted to secular pursuits, to do justice to the claims of such an engrossing charge. Then, I have not that fluency in prayer, that knowledge of the congregation, which is necessary for an elder to possess. In short, I could point out many men of higher attainments and more active zeal, every way better suited than myself for the proposed appointment. Nay, the very broad view you seem to take of the requirements of the office, only makes me more timid in assuming it."

"Let us examine your objections, Neville, one by one. You say you are too much immersed in business, too entirely secularized in your pursuits; well, whose fault is it?

are you justified in permitting your worldly employments to occupy all your thoughts—take up all your time? Is consecration of heart alone to be demanded from the officers of the Church, and viewed as unattainable by the private members? Can your time be better employed than in doing the Lord's work, and is it not included among those talents for which you must render an account in that day when we shall all give up our stewardship? Will not the blessing of God on your business transactions amply remunerate you for all the hours spent in his service? Then, again, you talk of your want of fluency in prayer. Is this wonderful—admitting that you do not undervalue your powers in this respect—when you confess that your attention is given to things seen and present, instead of those things which are unseen and eternal? You say you are not acquainted with the congregation. Will not your acceptance of the eldership furnish you with the means of remedying this defect? And as to those you think more fit for the charge than yourself, per-

haps they have the same opinion of your deservings; and thus in bandying compliments and uttering disclaimers of zeal and eligibility, the precious hours are consumed, while the Church is defrauded of those young men who have overcome the wicked one!"

"Come, husband," said Mabel, who saw by Edith's sorrowful countenance that she felt Herbert's remarks keenly; "you must not be too hard on Mr. Neville. You know he says he is open to conviction, and if he is engrossed in business, he is willing to contribute to every good object."

"Far be it from me, Mabel, to assume a tone of harshness or reproach, especially to one so much beloved and so nearly connected. My remarks were not meant to be personal, but general in their nature; and if I seemed too indignant, it was only because of the damage that grows to the hurt of the King's cause among us, when that wealth, talent, influence, and character, which should prove its strongest bulwark, are diverted to any subordinate pursuit. I know that our

brother is alive to the calls of the Church for his substance, but that is not himself. It is time that church members should be aroused from their lethargy in this respect, and that they should yield that active co-operation to the ministry, without which it never can perform the gracious work for which it is intended, and which our admirable polity renders so practicable and easy."

"I see," observed Mrs. Lindsay, "that it would seem as if the Methodists were becoming aware of the importance of lay representation."

"That is indeed an important testimony in its favour," said Mr. Neville, "and I own, dear Herbert, that there is some cause for your rebuke, severe though it be. At any rate, I can acquit Edith of any participation in those grovelling aspirations to which, perhaps, my entanglements in business have been owing. How often has she begged me to withdraw myself from speculations so perplexing, and devote more time to duty and my family. Indeed, I suspect that her anxiety to call home my little banished ones,

originates in the hope that I will share with her the task she has so kindly undertaken."

"Then let her not be disappointed, my dear nephew. If these conversations should convince you of the importance of doing something more for your family than merely toiling to make them rich, your visit will not have been made in vain; while your examination of the duties of the eldership will, if I mistake not, convince you of its claims on those who, like you, have it in their power so materially to further the interests of our Zion."

"Be assured, dear Mrs. Lindsay, that I will give a patient hearing to all that can be said upon the subject; and if our young pastor will now commence his instructions, I promise to listen attentively."

"Well then, brother, I will, as the best introduction to our subject, read you what is said in our Form of Government, under the head of Ruling Elders.

"'Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and

discipline, in conjunction with pastors or ministers. This office has been understood, by a great part of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures by the title of governments; and of those who rule well, but do not labour in the word and doctrine.'

"Here you see how much more is entrusted to them than the distribution of the elements. Elders are styled the representatives of the people—belonging to their class, chosen by their votes, and designed to form a counterpoise to the clerical part of the body ecclesiastic. Their special functions comprehend government and discipline. The first of these refers mainly to the judicatures of the Church; of these the primary court is the session, which consists of the pastor and ruling elders of a particular congregation, the pastor being the moderator or presiding officer. 'The church session,' says our Form of Government, 'is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation; for which purpose, they have power to inquire into the knowledge and

Christian conduct of the members of the church; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own congregation, and to introduce other witnesses, where it may be necessary to bring the process to issue, and where they can be procured to attend; to receive members into the church; to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude from the sacraments those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation; and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the Church.' The next court for power and importance is the Presbytery; and here we again find the ruling elder accompanying the pastor, or if the church be vacant, representing it; and in both these cases the vote of the lay elder is as influential as that of the preaching one. In Synods, the ratio of representation of the pastors and ruling elders continues the same as in the inferior court; and in the General Assembly, the judicatory highest in authority in the Church, a similar proportion is

maintained. In this judicature, which is the last resort of all who have been aggrieved by the decisions of the lower tribunals, the lay delegates often assume great prominence as prosecutors of appeals, or advocates of the different parties; and by their knowledge of law and business, greatly assist in the decisions of the house. By this brief sketch, you see how important is the government entrusted to the eldership. Nor is the other department of discipline less responsible, as you may judge from the extract I read concerning the duty of the session; so that, I am sure, you will at once perceive the propriety of the apostle's exhortation, 'Let the elder that ruleth well, be counted worthy of double honour.' "

"I do indeed, and confess that the office, as you describe it, assumes an importance and dignity I never before realized."

"I rejoice to hear you say so, my dear brother. The subject in hand, is of the greatest moment to the interests of the Church of the living God among us; scarcely yielding in importance to the question of the pastoral

office itself: for it is evident, that while it must be a work of time, to purify and prepare the sons of Levi for their trust, the materials for a pious and efficient eldership are ready to our hands, were they but convinced that a more active supervision of holy things is among the duties of lay members, instead of leaving every burthen to be borne by the ministry. Service, too, from those who have obtained consideration in their secular employments, counts much more than if rendered by those whose vocation is restricted to holy things; and the superior resources of pious laymen, enable them to give greater assistance to good objects, than can be accomplished merely by 'those who labour in word and doctrine.'

"I will, therefore, on these pleasant summer evenings, and at this shady spot—consecrated, I trust, by a holier influence than even the academic groves of Plato could boast—give you my views on the importance of the eldership; the authority for it, from the word of God; the qualifications necessary for it, and the duties it comprehends.

In the mean time, we must give place to the ladies and their babies, who have been marvellously quiet for the last half hour."

"That remark of yours is slanderous, of either or both of the classes you mention so slightingly," said Mr. Neville; "and as a punishment, Nelly and I will pelt you with clover flowers. Come, children!"

No further invitation was needed, and Herbert was speedily compelled to sue for a truce from the flowery attack.

CHAPTER II.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ELDERSHIP.

"Salute all them that have the rule over you."

"Now, husband, we are ready for your instructions," exclaimed Mabel, on the evening succeeding that of Edith's arrival; "mother's chair is in her own place, and I have sent the three little children out for a walk, lest you should complain of the interruption. Ellen begs leave to remain, and says

she will be as still as a mouse, if she may sit close to grandma."

The young pastor nodded assent, and thus began:—"'Order is heaven's first law;' and if in the natural world such wonderful evidences are presented to us of the harmony of its parts, and their adaptation to the ends proposed, shall we not suppose that in the Church—that spiritual and moral instrumentality so full of blessings to our race—a similar adjustment of the component parts will be observed? If this be so, we must find there that completeness of design which is best suited to comprehend all the objects to be attained. This symmetry of the whole design, combined with energy and efficiency, is pre-eminently to be found in the polity of that Church to which we all belong. Neither the pure democracy of the Baptists and Congregationalists, nor the oligarchy of the Episcopalians, can command the same beneficial results; still less can they be looked for amid the unmixed despotism of the Papacy, or the Erastianism of churches established by law. Especially in this coun-

try, where our civil constitution is based on the fundamental principle of Presbyterianism—that of being governed by our representatives chosen by ourselves—should this admirable system of checks and balances be duly appreciated. But to secure the advantages of this plan, it is evident that pastors and hearers alone are not sufficient. On the one hand, the minister may complain, like Martha, that he is left to serve alone; and on the other, the people may feel that they are not on equal ground with their clergyman. In this dilemma, the ruling elder seems presented, to obviate all the difficulties of the case. He is one of the flock, possessing the confidence and esteem of the church, fitted to promote their interests, of similar pursuits, and can never have around him the prestige and familiarity-repressing awe, sometimes appertaining to the sacred office. Yet are his relations with the pastor of the most intimate nature; associated with him as he is, for the preservation of good order in the church, and engaged in all that can further its interests."

"It seems by your statements, Herbert, as if the office you are recommending was like the balance wheel to the machine, that is required to preserve the equipoise of the whole."

"Exactly so. But the fact of their preserving the balance of power, is not the only ground of the importance of the eldership. They have in their hands the means of concentrating influence. How does their co-operation increase the extent of the pastor's ability to command the love and respect of his people! Accordingly, every judicious minister, instead of acting unadvisedly and without counsel, is glad to have his session share in the responsibility of his judicial transactions. In union there is strength; and the official enactments of this parochial court come to the people with a stringency, which, if assumed by their pastor solely, would either tend to rigour, or provoke resistance. But another proof of the importance of the lay-elder arises from the share he takes in the responsibility of the pastor's government over the church. That he is

partaker of this power, seems evident from the word used to designate the office, (1 Cor. xii. 28,) and the exhortation to 'rule with diligence.' Now, this ruling is the most irksome and delicate part of the ministerial work, especially as regards discipline, as every one knows who is conversant with such matters. Where offences occur which demand a sessional investigation, the poor preacher is sure to have a heart-scald of it. My mother can testify to this; happily, as yet, I speak not from actual experience."

"That I can, my son. Your father, occasionally in his congregation, had proof of this difficulty, and found it almost impossible to elicit testimony, or come at the real truth of the case; and his perplexity was much increased from the scarcity of elders, who might have assisted him in the investigation."

"I can easily imagine," remarked Mr. Neville, "that a minister would need the aid of some other persons in a trial like that you mention; and of course it is better that they should be fully acquainted with the

parties, as no stranger could be. Besides, if a mere advisory court is called together, their decisions want the force and authority of law."

"Add to all this the disadvantage of disclosing transactions that do not tell well for the church, and the danger of invoking some troublesome spirit, that might do more harm than good; and you will find a powerful argument in favour of a board of officers, well known to all concerned, of their own selection, of approved talents for governing, and with every possible inducement to bring these troubles to a happy issue. But the fact is, that pastors need this division of accountability; they are often timid and retiring in their nature, and especially prone to sensitive apprehensions, when called on to enter into conflict with their fellowmen. Therefore it is, that their hands require to be upheld by their coadjutors of the eldership; that their decisions may be as a three-fold cord, that is not quickly broken. Thus this branch of Church government is important, because it strengthens the power

of the preaching elder; which, as it consists not in the carnal weapons of warfare, but is entirely of a remedial and paternal character, ought to be sustained to the highest point which the general relaxation of discipline in these degenerate days will permit. But the ruling elder is important on another ground. Preachers, in poring over their books, are constantly in danger of originating new errors, or reviving old heresies in a modern garb; and their sedentary habits and theorizing speculations have often led the Church into dangers and difficulties of the most serious character."

"You think then, Herbert, that the apostle's caution is not yet obsolete: 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called!'"

"I do, Neville, and feel that there is great security in the plain good sense and unaffected orthodoxy of a body of picked men from the ranks of the laity, whose influence may be most efficacious in restraining a love of novelty and plausible opinions,

to which some of my brethren are addicted. But the importance of the eldership is increased by the new views adopted within the present century, of the calls of duty, and the Church's appropriate work. The extension of religious effort, which I fondly hope is to go on progressing far beyond its present limits, calls for a class of men distinct from the ministry, to occupy in an especial manner this wide field of usefulness. The first of these departments I shall mention, is, taking charge of the Sabbath-schools and Bible classes of the congregations, to which the elders respectively belong."

"I thought," said Edith, "that young persons generally took the care and instruction of those nurseries of the Church in their own hands."

"It has been so, undoubtedly, sister, and I am far from disdaining such assistance as this class can afford; but certainly the supervision of the whole ought to be placed under steadier and more judicious care than the ordinary attainments of young professors can lead us to expect from them. How

many of these hallowed meetings have been allowed to become mere scenes of frivolity and flirtation between the teachers of both sexes; and how important is it that the hours spent in the Sabbath-school be improved in the way best adapted to touch the hearts of the children, as well as to store the mind with scriptural knowledge! Besides the actual instruction, prayer is an essential part of the exercises that are required to maintain the prosperity of the undertaking; and here how needful that the officers of the church lead the devotions, more immediately referring to the lambs of the flock! The watchful care of the elders might often follow these little ones into places of temptation and mischief, which a pastor cannot enter; and the good effects of such fidelity, if combined with prudence and affection, might tell on these children's characters for life. It is not, however, in Sabbath-school prayer-meetings only that the elder's is an important office; in the week-day gatherings, and the monthly concerts, their aid is of the highest utility; indeed, if

they fulfilled their functions aright, the interest of these seasons would not be so dependent on the presence of the pastor as it now is; but would be kept up, even if he were providentially detained at home."

"You forget, Herbert, that all good men have not a gift in prayer or exhortation."

"I own that there are diversities of gifts, brother, but where we find piety, common sense, a good English education, and the usual fluency of speech, a person can hardly fail of expressing himself acceptably. Practice does much to facilitate the habit of social prayer. But there are other places at which it is important to avail ourselves of the aid of the session; I mean in the visitation of the sick. That this was in use during the apostolic age, we know, from the direction which has been so strangely perverted by the Romanists to signify their extreme unction—'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.' "

"I thought, Herbert, that was the peculiar province of the pastor."

"It is so; but it is the duty of the elders, also, in conjunction with him. Indeed, I have heard of some congregations where the minister was not fond of visiting, and this work was entirely done by the elders. It is often desirable that the pastor be accompanied by his elder on these occasions; and as an active session should strive to spare their clergyman all unnecessary interruptions from those studies which are so essential to him, they may, by dividing the people into districts, have the whole under their inspection; and when the case requires it, apprize their minister of those instances in which his visits are more than ordinarily needful."

"Take care, brother, or you will give all the power to the eldership."

"There is no danger of such a monopoly. On the contrary, ruling elders need stirring up to a greater diligence in the oversight of that church in which their position is so honourable and so useful. Another proof of their importance is found in the rapidly increasing feeling of the Church as to the

apportionment of funds for benevolent objects.

"While I am willing to admit that there has been an injudicious squeamishness about pastors having to talk about money-matters, it does seem better that the pecuniary interests of the church should be placed in the hands of laymen; partly because they understand business better, and partly from the incompatibility of such affairs with the all-absorbing concerns of the preaching elder's appropriate province. When, then, the churches are unprovided with deacons, the whole of these concerns necessarily devolve upon the elders."

"I am glad you have mentioned the office of deacon, Herbert," said Edith, "I want to know what you think about it."

"I think it is sanctioned by Scripture, Edith, and very important to take care of the temporalities of the Church; but when it does not exist in a congregation, the elders ought to do double duty. Even where deacons are to be found, I would not have so important a branch of duty left to them

only; indeed, there is work enough for both classes, especially if the last mentioned officers act as trustees for the church, collecting pew-rents, keeping up the repairs, attending to the poor of the congregation—their original designation of duty—superintending the parochial schools, where such exist, and doing many things which at present either go undone, or are left for the pastor to attend to."

"You are aware, Lindsay, that some people think the Scripture warrant for the last named office much more explicit than for the lay elder."

"I am, brother, but will not now enter on an argument on that score, for the subject will naturally come up in our next conversation, as I shall then attempt to prove the authority for the eldership. But see, what carriage is that stopping at our gate? Your little girls are there, Neville, I am sure, from their resemblance to you. Let us welcome them to Violet Vale."

"It is indeed my little Fannie and Nannie, though we did not expect them for some

days; and as my sister-in-law is not with them, I fear she must be ill."

The gentlemen hastened to receive the little strangers; poor Edith burst into tears of uncontrolable emotion, though all unobserved by her husband, whose attention was fully occupied by the new comers.

"Cheer thee, cheer thee, my sweet sister," said Mabel tenderly; "no one, however wayward, can be long near you without loving you; and these poor children appeal to your compassion, for they are motherless."

"I know it is very foolish," replied Edith, "and if you will receive them for me, I will go up stairs a moment, to obliterate all traces of my childishness."

She disappeared as she spoke, and before the process of disembarkation was completed, had smoothed her brow and returned to the parlour, to enfold her new charge to her benignant heart; for even as Mabel had foretold, a sense of their loss opened up the warm sympathy of her ready affections. It appeared that their aunt had been taken ill

with a fever which the physicians feared might be infectious; and she had therefore anticipated their visit, very much lamenting, however, that her illness prevented the stay of the confidential nurse who accompanied them in the carriage, as she was needed at home to attend upon the invalid. In Edith's mind, this last circumstance was rather desirable than otherwise, and she therefore declined the substitute for the nurse, sent also by Miss Lushington, as her sister's house was not calculated to accommodate so large an increase of guests. The little girls were to occupy a small room opening out of their mother's, who thought that her own care, and that of little Herbert's attendant, would be quite sufficient to ensure their comfort. At the departure of their old favourite, the little girls were quite uproarious in their grief; but at this moment the children came in from their walk, and joy at the sight of their little brother, seemed to overpower every other feeling. This, of course, gratified Edith, who observed to Mabel, "I am

sure I shall love them, if they will only like me in return. Are they not beautiful?"

The little twins were, in truth, as lovely a pair as could well be imagined. At first sight it was difficult to distinguish between them—the same luxuriant hair, the same hazel eyes and fair complexion, their height and size the same; but on a closer inspection it was evident that Fannie's beauty was of a more haughty character, and temper had set its seal on the symmetry of her face; while Nannie, resembling her father in the expression as well as features, had a winning smile, that made its way to the hearts of all beholders. Fannie was the older of the two, and evidently swayed the meeker with arbitrary power; with her aunt, too, she was the favourite, having been named after her maternal, and Nannie after the paternal grandmother.

CHAPTER III.

AUTHORITY FOR THE ELDERSHIP.

"And God hath set some in the church —— governments."

It was long ere Edith could compose her feelings, on the night when the children of her husband were first placed under her supervision. Fatigued with their journey, they wished to retire to rest early; and after she had assisted in the process of undressing them, she hastened to her aunt and sister, with whom she talked long and earnestly on her new responsibilities. Mrs. Lindsay said much that was encouraging and kind, and Mabel reminded Edith of her own early wilfulness, and the good effects of her aunt's instructions. "Yes!" replied Mrs. Neville, "if I had the patience and skill of aunt Lindsay, it would be another matter; and then you never were such a heathen, as to go to bed without even repeating

'Now I lay me down to sleep,'

as these poor girls did to-night."

"Perhaps it was the effect of weariness or forgetfulness," said Mrs. Lindsay. "Did you put them in mind to it?"

"No, aunt, I thought it best to postpone all my efforts at government for the present."

"You were quite right, my child; but before we dismiss the subject, let us address the throne of grace on their behalf, as well as that you may be directed and cheered in your arduous work." The sisters gladly assented to this proposal, and the young step-mother rose from her knees, calmed and comforted by the consciousness that help had been sought from that source whence alone it could be found. Her husband appeared to guess the reason of her subdued and anxious looks, but mutual delicacy prevented any conversation on the subject; though his unusual softness of manner seemed to indicate that he felt and appreciated the greatness of the task she had voluntarily assumed.

On the ensuing morning, the twins were awakened by Betsy—Herbert's nurse—and

willingly arose. They were about to leave the room, when their attendant, who had been taught her duty to her Maker, turned to Nannie, and asked her if she did not say her prayers. "No," said the child, in astonishment at the question.

"Then you won't be fit to live with such good people as they are here," replied Betsy.

"As for that," returned Fannie, who always did the talking for both, "we have been used to as good people as any you ever saw, I expect; and I don't see what right you have to talk so to us. I shall tell my father on you when I go down stairs."

Then the bell for worship rang, and Betsy hastened down, summoning the twins also to attend, which they did, without exactly understanding what was coming. The sight of the whole family collected together, the solemnity of Herbert's tones and manner, the orderly behaviour of the little Lindsays, and the simplicity and appropriateness of the services, so calmed our little termagant, that her purposes of complaint were forgot-

ten; and after breakfast, so much was found new and amusing in the garden, poultry-yard, &c., that the day passed off more peacefully than might have been expected from its commencement. Edith feared that two such unquiet little intruders might prevent the continuation of those conversations which were so precious to her and her husband; but aunt Lindsay had projected a walk with the children to an old acquaintance, where they were all to stay to tea, thus leaving the trio undisturbed, to the discussion proposed, and at the accustomed hour, Herbert thus began:—"We are now to prove the authority of the eldership from Scripture. The apostle has furnished us with two lists of officers, which, combined, present to us all the classes, ordinary and extraordinary, of those whom he has given to his Church. The first of these (Ephes. iv. 11) designates only those whose peculiar department was the work of the ministry; but the second (1 Cor. xii. 28) comprehends others, that cannot be thus disposed of. 'And God hath set some in the church, first

apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' The first three, being not at present under consideration, shall be passed over; while miracles, gifts of healings, and diversities of tongues, are manifestly peculiar to the age they appeared in; two officers, however, yet remain to be noticed—'helps, governments'—the first of which so manifestly refers to the deacons, who were originated as an assistance to the apostles, that we proceed to the latter. This term, as you, Neville, are well aware, implies, originally, a shipmaster or pilot, who sat at the helm, and regulated the movements of the vessel. Such a class must needs be important, for 'God hath set some in the church,' and as governing is one of those functions which are inseparable from harmony and good order, the class meant must be permanent and ordinary; not temporary and extraordinary, like the apostles themselves, or the miracles and healings.

"Again, in Romans xii. 8, after repeating

the metaphor of the members and the body, with which the text we last considered was introduced, Paul says, 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity—or liberality (margin); he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' Here the gifts relative to the preaching of the word are specified by prophecy, ministry, teaching, and exhortation: 'he that giveth,' evidently refers to the deacons, whose office it was to impart, or distribute; as 'he that showeth mercy,' points out the widows and other persons of both sexes, who, from the destitutions of the age, were employed to visit and take care of the distressed."

"There is one designation you have not alluded to, Herbert—'he that ruleth.'"

"I have not forgotten that, I assure you, though I disposed of the other classes first.

This office is here not connected with preaching, nor restricted, as some would make it out, to the family of those who held it, nor to the church stock, or public funds; nor could it have meant pious magistrates, for in those days heathens only, bore civil rule. It is, therefore, identified with the 'governments' considered a while ago; and by a third passage, which I shall quote from 1 Tim. v. 17, the attribute of ruling is declared to belong to elders, who do not preach, as well as to those that 'labour in the word and doctrine.' 'Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour.'"

"I thought the Episcopalians contended that the rulers here spoken of were diocesans, Herbert."

"Various, my dear brother, have been the attempts to distort the meaning of a passage which so plainly indicates the scriptural origin of Presbyterianism. The exposition you refer to, if it prove anything, proves too much; for the preaching elder has more honour assigned him than the mere ruler; a

thing not tolerated among the advocates for prelacy. In accordance with our views, we find in the preceding passages, that preaching, exhorting, &c., are placed before ruling, evidently proving that they, at least, are on equal terms, as to rank.

"But you may well ask what is the sense in which the term elder is to be understood? To reply to this, we turn to the Old Testament; for it is a feature of the gospel dispensation worth remarking, that many of its terms, institutions, and elements, are but the expansion and purification of initial truths, committed, with more or less clearness, to the Church, under the preparatory training of the former covenant. Thus the Sabbath, although a positive enactment, takes its place in that code of morals, the decalogue, which was so far to outlast the ceremonial part of the Mosaic ritual, and is continued under the present system, with only that change of day and relaxation of austerity, which its adaptation to gospel worship required. Another of these transmitted observances seems to be the mode of church gov-

ernment by elders, as practiced in the synagogues."

"The Episcopalians, Herbert, trace their three orders to the high-priests, priests, and Levites."

"They do, indeed, discover a fancied resemblance to them, but many reasons concur to prove that the Aaronic priesthood had nothing in common with the gospel ministry. Admirably suited to the types and shadows by which it was surrounded, and enlisting by its combined religious and political attributes all the pride and affection of the Jewish people, the temple, as it glittered in the sunset, while the smoke of the evening sacrifice ascended to heaven, and the hearts of all devout worshippers turned to it in fond recollection, seemed a fit emblem of the Jewish polity in its exclusiveness and peculiarity. But that temple was to be razed to the ground, and the system to which it belonged was to give place to the universality of the New Testament privilege. The Aaronic priesthood was limited to a peculiar family, and its functions of sacrifice and incense

ceased when the Lamb of God had taken away the sin of the world; as the Levitical attendants could no longer minister when the Roman arms had defiled and destroyed the sacred edifice."

"What date do you assign to the first introduction of the synagogues, brother?" asked Edith; "they are mentioned in one of the Psalms, I believe."

"They are, sister; but it is difficult to fix the probable era of their institution. Some authors suppose they are as ancient as the ceremonial law; while others have thought that they originated after the Babylonish captivity. It is enough for my purpose, that they were in universal use among the Jews in the days of our Lord's abode on earth; that they were sanctioned by his resorting thither to worship and to preach; that his apostles and followers made use of them for like purposes, and that the very name is twice applied to Christian assemblies. (Heb. x. 25, James ii. 2.) But whatever obscurity may rest on the origin of the synagogue, the use of the term *elder*, as

indicative of office, runs back to the earliest antiquity. The patriarchal authority was the first that human society submitted to, and seems founded on the natural relation between parents and children. Under all the changes of the Hebrew form of government, this patriarchal system still continued as the foundation of the whole theocracy; and the same usage of the term occurs in application to domestic arrangements. Eliezer of Damascus, is called in the Hebrew, Abraham's 'servant, the elder (*i. e.*, ruler) of his house;' and we hear of 'all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house,' as well as 'all the elders of the land of Egypt;' to which the term 'senators' (Psalm cv. 22) is synonymous in Hebrew. The expression as applied to the children of Israel, occurs first in the directions given to Moses, by the Lord God, who spoke to him out of the burning bush; and it is never lost sight of after that period, during the whole course of their history.

"But this organization is declared to be applied also to religious purposes. Hence

the Psalmist says, 'Praise him in the assembly of the elders.' (Psalm cvii. 32.) When the people met for local worship, it was under the direction of their natural and ordinary chiefs, the elders; and as this government of the people by elders was independent of, and antecedent to, the covenant of peculiarity, so was it to survive the abolishment of that which had decayed, and had waxed old. In this respect, we find that while the origin of apostles and deacons can both be traced, the elders run far back beyond the organization of the Church, and appear as an arrangement not springing out of a new state of things, but transferred from an old one.

"I will here quote the opinion of an eminent living dignitary, of the Anglican Church, (Dr. Whately, Archbishop of Dublin): —'It appears highly probable — I might say morally certain—that wherever a Jewish synagogue existed that was brought, the whole, or the chief part of it, to embrace the gospel, the apostles did not there so much form a Christian church (or congregation, *ecclesia*) as make an existing congre-

gation Christian, by introducing the Christian sacraments and worship, and establishing whatever regulations were necessary for the newly adopted faith; leaving the machinery (if I may so speak) of government unchanged; the rulers of synagogues, elders, and other officers (whether spiritual, or ecclesiastical, or both) being already provided in the existing institutions. And it is likely that several of the earliest Christian churches did originate in this way; that is, that they were converted synagogues, which became Christian churches as soon as the members, or the main part of the members acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. The attempt to effect this conversion of a Jewish synagogue into a Christian church seems always to have been made, in the first instance, in every place where there was an opening for it. Even after the call of the idolatrous Gentiles, it appears plainly to have been the practice of the apostles Paul and Barnabas, when they came to any city in which there was a synagogue, to go thither first and deliver their sacred message to the Jews and

'devout (or proselyte) Gentiles;' according to their own expression (Acts xiii. 16) 'to the men of Israel and those that feared God;' adding that it was necessary that the word of God should be 'first preached to them.' And when they founded a church in any of those cities in which (and such was probably a very large majority) there was no Jewish synagogue that received the gospel, it is likely they would still conform in a great measure to the same model.' "

"The Archbishop's hypothesis seems to me very plausible, Herbert, and it is easy to perceive how, by degrees, the genealogical or patriarchal constitution of the elders was modified by circumstances. Under the present constitution of society, the same ends are gained by entrusting power to men of mature age, and especially to heads of families; because the church is thus brought under the same influence that rules the families of which it is composed."

"It is so; and in the synagogues—as is known to all conversant in Jewish usages, and as Dr. Whitby, another Episcopal di-

vine, tells us in his Commentary—the elders of the Jews were of two sorts; first such as governed in the synagogue, and secondly, such as ministered in reading and expounding their scriptures and traditions.

"Calmet tells us in his Dictionary, that there were generally in the synagogues many men of eminence who presided in them, and that their number depended on the extent of the cities where they were, or the number of people who frequented the synagogue. In some there might be seventy elders who presided, in others perhaps ten, in others four or five. But yonder is my mother, with her clamorous troop; and we must adjourn the remainder of our proofs of the authority of the eldership till to-morrow."

The children were delighted with what they had seen; but being tired, were willing to retire early. To Edith's great pleasure, as she was putting them to bed, Nannie said, "Will you teach me my prayers? Ellen says her prayers, and I am older than her." "That I will, my dear child," she replied;

and the little girl kneeling by her side, repeated after her the Lord's Prayer. Fannie, however, made no intimation of a similar desire; and when Edith asked her if she would not say her prayers also, replied, "No," very angrily. Edith did not resent the disrespectful manner in which she spoke, but mildly answered, "Your dear mother prayed to God, and if you want to go to heaven to her, you must pray too."

"Do not talk to me about my mother," replied the child in agony of passion; "she is dead, and grandma is dead, and if aunt dies, we shall have nobody to love us in the whole world."

"Oh sister!" cried Nannie, "do not say so. There is father and little Herbert, I am sure; and she," pointing to Edith, "is very good to us, and I think we ought to call her mother, as father told us, even if aunt did forbid it."

"Call me what you like, so you will only let me love you, and do you good," answered Mrs. Neville, "my name is Edith; will not that do to call me by? But Fannie, if your

mother was so good, you should not feel so badly about her; for she is a great deal happier now than she could be on earth, where you know she was sick so long, and suffered so much. In her Bible, which your father has for you, she has written down a prayer for her little girls, but a short time before she died. Would you not like to read that?"

"I cannot read or write either," said Fannie, sulkily; "aunt said we were too little to go to school."

"I will teach you," replied Edith, "if you will try to learn."

"Thank you, ma'am," returned Nannie, more civilly than she had yet spoken to her new mamma. Edith then kissed them both, and was leaving the room, when she heard Nannie say, "I do love her, Fannie, and so must you, or you'll be very ungrateful." This repaid her for all her patient forbearance, and she hastened to her friends, with a peaceful countenance.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTHORITY FOR THE OFFICE, CONTINUED.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church."

With all Edith's mild endurance, it could not be concealed from her husband, that his children did not treat her as they ought, or address her by the name of mother; and it was only at her earnest request, that he forbore to enforce her claims to respect. In the meanwhile, the principle of assimilation was doing its work; silently, indeed, but surely, on the little rebels. When they heard Ellen reading to her grandmother, Nannie said, "Won't you teach us, ma'am?" Mrs. Lindsay willingly assented, and proposed, moreover, that the lessons should not be mentioned to their father, till they had made some progress. This idea was so pleasant, that even Fannie went for her book, and a long lesson in spelling was accomplished without weariness. "Now, grand-

ma, do tell us a story," begged little Ellen. The request was granted, and the little group were delighted with the narrative. Again, as evening drew near, Mrs. Lindsay would have led away the children, to avoid any interruption to Herbert's conversations, but Mabel declared it was her turn to go. This point amicably adjusted, the young pastor led his mother to her rocking chair, and thus commenced:—"In our last coversation, I endeavoured to identify the expression 'governments,' and 'he that ruleth,' with 'the elder that ruleth well;' and after tracing this term of office to the earliest antiquity, inferred that it had been introduced into the Christian Church, from that mode of administration to which the apostles had been accustomed in the synagogue: this having been the place which they and their Master were accustomed to frequent on the Sabbath for worship. I now would direct your attention to another mode of proof, for the authority of the eldership. Let me first, however, apologize for thus dilating on the warrant for this office, which seemed more necessary

to be dwelt on even than that of pastor; because *that* is conceded to be essential to the Christian Church, even by those who differ most widely, in its qualifications, training, or functions."

"I think," said Mrs. Lindsay, "you need not make excuses to any of the present company, for enlarging on the evidence in favour of an institution so beneficial to the Church, and yet so little appreciated and understood, even by those who adopt it in their polity. On this subject, I wish the opinion of your beloved professor, Herbert, was imparted to our people more generally. Do you remember what I mean?"

"Perfectly, dear mother. He addressed himself to an elder, and said, 'I have a higher opinion of the dignity of your office than most men entertain; for I believe it was the original constitution in the Church, and the preaching elder a modification of it.' This view entirely coincides with what I am about to advance, namely, that as *elder* and *bishop* are by Presbyterians considered as interchangeable, so the latter term is justly

thought to belong to the lay presbyter as much as to the pastor. In proof of the force of this assertion, let us examine Paul's charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus, (Acts xx. 17—28,) where he gives them this remarkable exhortation: 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' Here the Greek word (episcopous,) as well as all the pronouns, are in the plural number, which indicates, I think, that it applies to all the elders, whether ruling or teaching ones. In the Epistle to the Philippians, the same apostle addresses 'all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' Now, as we cannot suppose that a church so highly commended by the apostle as this, (chap. iv. 14—18) should be so deficient in its organization as to be without those elders, which are recorded as having been ordained in every church; more especially as the place 'where prayer was wont to be made,' and to

which 'the women resorted,' must have been either a synagogue or proseucha, and therefore under Jewish legislation; (Acts xvi. 8;) we must understand them either included in one of the above mentioned classes, or totally omitted in the apostolic enumeration. The latter idea seems preposterous; we may therefore suppose that they were comprehended among the bishops; especially as Paul himself uses the terms convertibly, when, after directing Titus to 'ordain elders in every city,' he goes on in describing their qualifications to say, 'for a *bishop* must be blameless as the steward of God.' "

"What, do you then understand the apostle's directions to bishops, to apply to ruling elders, as well as preaching ones, Herbert?"

"I do, brother; and thereby propose to obviate the objection, that while the bishop's and deacon's characteristics are described, nothing is said about the lay presbyters; and if you will examine the passages in question, you will see that they are equally appropriate to both classes of officers."

"I believe you are right, Herbert; for

though in Timothy it is said that a bishop must be 'apt to teach,' and in Titus, he is described as 'holding fast the true doctrine as he hath been taught, that he may be able by the teaching which is wholesome both to exhort and to confute the gainsayers,' (Macknight's Paraphrase,) yet these expressions do not either of them overleap the legitimate province of a ruling elder."

"Let us, then, before we proceed further, examine the meaning of the word *bishop;* perhaps it will not, in its original signification, at all favour the hypothesis, which communicates to it so much sanctity and clerical exclusiveness.

"By Parkhurst it is said, that episcopos means an overseer, an inspector, one who hath the inspection or oversight, a superintendent, a bishop. In the Septuagint, from whence the writers of the New Testament appear to have taken this word, it denotes an overseer; 1st. of the army, (Numb. xxxi. 14; Judges ix. 28; 2 Kings xi. 15, 16.) 2d. of workmen, (2 Chron. xxxiv. 12—17.)

3d. of the house of the Lord, (2 Kings xi. 18,) &c., &c. In Donnegan's Lexicon the same word is rendered, one who oversees and protects, a president or guardian, an inspector, a scout or spy, a bishop.

"All these meanings certainly refer as much to the ruling, as the teaching elder. But my last argument is derived from our Lord's method of dealing with offenders. 'Tell it unto the Church.' (Matt. xviii. 17.) Here, as in a previous case, I must refer you to the Old Testament, where in many instances, the people are said to have done things which were done by the elders. Thus Exod. iii. 14, 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you,' is immediately explained, as to the way in which the command was to be executed by adding, 'Go and gather *the elders* of Israel together, and say unto them,' &c., 'and thou shalt come, thou and *the elders* of Israel unto the king of Egypt. Again, we read (Exod. iv. 30, 31,) that Moses and Aaron did the signs in the sight of *the people*, and *the people* believed.' But

immediately before it had been said (verse 29) 'that they went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel,' which would be a nugatory statement, if it did not mean that the *people* who saw the signs and believed in consequence, were the *elders of the people.*

"In Exod. xii. 3, the Lord says unto Moses and Aaron, 'Speak ye unto *all the congregation* of Israel;' but in executing this command Moses called for all 'the elders of Israel,' and gave them the necessary orders. Not to be tedious, I refer you to Exod. xix. 8; Deut. v. 28; Lev. iv. 15, as exemplifications of the representative character of the office."

"Well, Herbert, we will coincide with your views on this point. What next?"

"Why the next thing is to examine the text I so lately mentioned: 'Tell it unto the Church.' The context gives a full direction how to treat offending members, in order to recover them, or if they remain obstinate, to cast them out of the fellowship of the Church. The expressions made use

of are undeniably taken from the Jewish dispensation. The effect of an unsuccessful process is thus described: 'Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.' These words plainly refer to the contempt felt by the Jews for the nations around, and for the tax-gatherers—those covetous imposers, whose very existence was a proof that the favoured people were reduced to the bondage of the Roman power. Besides, the Jewish was the only Church then in existence—the Christian not having been established. But the power to punish offenders, pronounce sentence, and regulate church matters belonged to the elders of the synagogue. Therefore we conclude that the mode of dealing with offenders was to be taken from the model of that institution, with which the disciples were all familiar, and that our Saviour meant by telling it unto the Church, to refer the case to those elders whose appropriate office it was to redress grievances of this nature; and we reason by analogy, that as in the passages I quoted, the Israelites were said to do things

done by their elders, so by the Church (the same word by which the Septuagint renders congregation—*ecclesia*,) that Christ intended, not to publish every difficulty to each individual member, male or female, adult or child, but to place it in the hands of the eldership.

"If time permitted, I might advance as a proof of my point Heb. xiii. 17: 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves,' &c. A church state is supposed to have existed among those to whom the apostle wrote, (chap. x. 24, 25,) which is expressed by the word *synagogue* in the Greek, where we have it 'the assembling of yourselves together.' As the rule practised in that mode of worship would be familiar to the Hebrew converts, so they would well understand that the ruling, as well as the preaching elder, was included in the obedience and submission to be rendered. The same conclusion may be arrived at from 1 Thess. v. 12, 13: 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and ad-

monish you,' &c., for in Acts xvii. 1, we find that there was a synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, where 'Paul, as his manner was, went in to them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures;' the result was 'that some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.' A church thus organized could not be ignorant of the office of 'the elder that ruleth well.'"

"Well, Herbert, I think we will all allow that you have showed strong grounds for the authority of your favourite office. The next thing will, I suppose, be to enforce its claims to our regard."

"You may well say so; for how superior are the grounds on which our ruling elders might assert their prerogative to 'feed the Church of God over them which the Holy Ghost hath made overseers,' to those on which the vestry-men or committee-men of other denominations act. These are confessedly of human origin—a merely prudential organization, irresponsible in their deci-

sions to any tribunal whatever, and if not members of the church, as is frequently the case, unfit to legislate in the things of the kingdom."

Here the noise of childish grief interrupted the conversation, and Mabel and her train were seen advancing in sad confusion. Edith recognized the voice of Nannie, and hastened to inquire into the cause of her distress. The poor child was wet, as if she had fallen into the water, and the blood streamed from a wound in her head. It appeared that in gathering wild flowers near a brook, she pulled some that Fannie was determined to possess. Nannie tried to resist the unjust demand, but before Mabel had time to interpose, the elder sister had pushed poor Nannie into the water, and in falling, her head came against a stone with such violence as to inflict a serious hurt. The sufferer was immediately taken up stairs, where her head was bound up, and she was carefully placed in a warm bed, and she soon fell asleep. Her concern for her sister seemed to make her uneasy in her slumber;

and "Don't be angry with Fannie; please, father, don't whip her;" was frequently repeated. "She will be good soon; I am sure she will. She cannot help getting good here where everybody is so kind to us. I do love you, my dear mother." With such broken sentences her rest was disturbed, her breathing difficult, and her countenance flushed. Edith trembled as she thought of the fever that had attacked her aunt, and determined to watch by her bedside during the night. The offender seemed evidently ill at ease, though by no means prepared to confess herself in the wrong, and observed a sulky silence. Mrs. Lindsay took her into her own room that Nannie might not be annoyed by a bedfellow, as it was evident that she was hourly getting worse. Delirium soon came on, when the same idea of shielding her sister was still manifested in her ravings. First begging for pardon for her sister, then entreating her to kiss and make friends, she talked incessantly. "You know I never told on you whenever you hurt me before," she exclaimed, "and indeed I would

not have said a word about it now, if aunt Mabel had not come up before I got out of the brook." Edith could scarcely restrain her tears at the evidence, so unconsciously given, of the tyranny of one sister, and the meekness of the other. By daylight the physician was with her, and he confirmed the most serious apprehensions of Mrs. Neville, pronouncing the disease a fever of the most malignant kind.

Every precaution was at once taken to prevent the spread of the disorder to the other children, whom Mrs. Lindsay offered to take to the country at once. Mabel remained to assist Edith in taking care of Nannie, in conjunction with an experienced nurse, recommended by the doctor. Up to this period Fannie had showed no tokens of contrition; but when she found how much every one was alarmed about her sister, her pride gave way, and she shed bitter tears of anguish and self-condemnation; then coming to Edith, she begged her forgiveness in the humblest manner. "Oh! mother," said the weeping girl, "I must call you mother now,

for you act like a mother—but what will become of me? I am like that naughty Cain, Ellen talks about, who killed his brother. What would my first mother that is in heaven say to me now? She would not have me for her child. Oh! if I only knew how, I would pray to God to have mercy on me and make my dear Nannie well again!"

Edith's tender heart was affected by this burst of agonized feeling, but she felt it right, to set in plain terms the evil effects of Fannie's violence before her, and besought her never again to grieve a sister so fondly attached to her. She also took the opportunity to urge the necessity of seeking the forgiveness of God, spoke of his compassion for sinners and his willingness to pardon the penitent, proposing at last to spend a few minutes in prayer together. Fannie gladly consented, and when they rose from their knees, her countenance wore an expression of humble grief that differed widely from its usual haughty expression.

CHAPTER V.

DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP.

"Occupy till I come."

How painful is the transition from the cheerful activity of a household in time of health, to the hushed and noiseless movements, prescribed in sickness! Deeply was this realized at Violet Vale, during the day succeeding Nannie's seizure; for the children were absent—those privileged disturbers of domestic quiet—and the older members of the family trod lightly, and spoke gently, lest they might disturb the unconscious sufferer. Mr. Neville was not only under great concern for his child, but was also tortured with the fear that Edith might be affected by exposure to the contagion; but no entreaties could prevail on her to leave the little girl, even though the excuse of her infant might by many have been thought sufficient. But she preferred to banish the nurseling from her bosom, rather than leave

one whom she thought had the strongest claim on her attentions. Her husband shared her vigils, and assisted her during the day; but towards evening, the nurse urged on them both the necessity of a little relaxation from their anxious toil, and they agreed to leave Nannie to her care awhile. Herbert was sitting in the usual place, with Mabel at his side. The latter welcomed them, but remarked, "I doubt our conversations are at an end for the present, as your minds are too much occupied with private trouble, to dwell on public duties."

"Quite the contrary," said Edith; "we have come down for that very purpose. Nurse seems very attentive, and has promised to call us when the time for the medicine comes round; and we both feel that this opportunity of learning what is incumbent on Christians should not be lost, because the Lord's hand is laid upon us."

"You are right in that deduction, sister," replied Herbert; "and if Neville can command his attention, there is no reason why we should not go on. There is, at least, no

fear of interruption from our dear, noisy children. I will therefore consider the duties which devolve on the eldership, some of which do not immediately respect their office, but have an important bearing on their official standing. And the first of this class which I shall mention, is prudence in their secular affairs. Most of our elders are engaged in business, and it is of essential moment, that they should so conduct their employments as to escape the suspicion of worldliness. I do not mean that they are to be remiss in their vocation, whatever it may be; far from it—for one who is inactive for himself, will be so for the church; and it is indispensable that they practice diligence and frugality, that they may walk honestly to those that are without, provide for their own families, and have something to give to him that needeth. But all this is very far removed from a spirit of speculation, greed of gain, or want of punctuality in pecuniary engagements. Embarrassment in money matters is of itself a serious bar to an elder's usefulness; much more so when it is occa-

sioned by negligence or indiscretion. There is no vice, in the present day, so universal as covetousness; and none which should be more guarded against by the standard-bearers of the Lord's host. Insidious in its approaches, plausible in its excuses, this serpent-fiend allures its victims, till its many folds have encircled them, and the life of godliness is crushed out under its convolutions. Oh! that the elders of the Church would see to it, that they withstand the first approaches of this *decent* sin. But another point of duty, twice insisted on by Paul, in directing about these overseers of Zion, is the proper government of their own house. When the children of elders are to be found anywhere but in their seats in the house of God, it is a bad sign of the state of things at home; 'if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?' In these days, men seem to think all their duty to their families consists in making money for them, even though the effect is to render the sons dissipated and idle, and the daughters extravagant and

useless; and during the process, all parental responsibility is laid on the poor mother, often ill-fitted, either by want of health, education, or leisure, to sustain the burthen to which she is condemned. No wonder that there are so many wilful Absaloms and mourning Davids! The conscientious elder, then, should instruct his children in their religious duties, take them to the sanctuary, and fervently commend them to a covenant God in prayer. This is the more to be insisted on, because it is from the sons of the eldership that the Church must look for a large portion of her ministers. Hitherto, I acknowledge, the number has been comparatively small that has been received from this channel; but methinks better days are coming, in which the first fruits of our families, as well as our substance, will be consecrated to the Lord. This idea is quite consonant to the next duty we will consider—that of 'devising liberal things' for benevolent objects. With the present extending views of the paramount obligation resting on Christians to contribute of their

substance, an elder is unsuited to the office who does not set a good example to the flock in this respect. The pastor, however it may be in his heart to do great things, often has to lament his inability and slender means; but the ruling presbyter is frequently in a position that allows him ample scope for this delightful service; and never, never will the Church come up to the requisitions of duty in this particular, till her spiritual guides shall lead the way."

"You lay great stress upon systematic giving, brother," said Edith.

"I do, sister. How can we expect a blessing from God, while we withhold those thank-offerings which he has a right to expect? Not that our contributions should be considered as a way of purchasing the Lord's favour, or that we should attempt, by endowing a monastery, or decorating a shrine, to cover a multitude of sins; but they should be brought into the treasury of God, because he claims them, because we owe them, and because of the blessings he has promised us in consequence. There is another duty

which seems to come under this miscellaneous class, and that is, that the ruling elders should watch over the interests and promote the comfort of their pastor. Much is included under this head, which the limits of these conversations will not permit us to dwell upon, but I will mention some items. Where strangers make such frequent appeals to the minister's hospitality as is often done, especially in our country congregations, are not the elders better situated to entertain the frequently-arriving guest than he can be? Would it not cheer the heart of a clergyman, to see that his elders were willing to abound 'in the riches of their liberality,' to spare the outlay of his limited income; or save his sick wife from the perplexities incident to hospitality with an empty cupboard? Another means of lightening ministerial cares would be found by the elders inducing the congregation to effect the life insurance of their preacher. This desirable method of securing a resource for the widow and the fatherless, ought not to be neglected by those who, being salaried men, know that

with their own life terminates the income which is required for the support of their family; but the greatest obstacle to its being done by the pastor, is that he cannot spare the annual payments from his stipend; but these, if collected by voluntary subscriptions, or a stated assessment on the pews, would not be burthensome to any one, while the aggregate thus produced, would remove a heavy load of care from the anxious husband and parent, and soothe his harassed mind with the certainty of his people's attachment."

"I do think that is a very good plan, Herbert, and should rejoice if it were universally practised, for the pitiable situation of unprovided widows or orphans must bedew the pastor's death-bed with the bitterest regret; and either of the modes you suggested is feasible and easy. What else is to be done for the ministry?"

"The next mode of alleviating the pastor's perplexities, Neville, is to collect a church library, to be arranged in a session-room or study—call it what you please—

where he might advantageously be occupied during the interval between the services of public worship, and from whence a door opening to the pulpit might give him entrance to the sacred desk, without the publicity of a passage through the aisles of the church. Here valuable or scarce books, new religious publications, and church literature in general, would give a minister many an intellectual treat, without his pocket suffering by the transaction."

"I think I can recognize a woman's hint there, Herbert," said Mr. Neville. "I suppose Mabel is like all the ladies, apt to complain if her husband ventures to buy too many books."

"It was not Mabel, but my mother, who suggested the plan, Neville. I think the idea is a good one, and in process of time, works might be collected of great value, though perhaps too expensive for an individual to purchase. As the session are to have means of access to the library, they might benefit by the arrangement nearly as much as the preacher."

"Another duty clearly belonging to the eldership—and more especially so, where deacons are not to be found—is to superintend collections made in the congregation for benevolent objects."

"An elder is a working bee in your hive, brother."

"Let us work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work. We find this was the accustomed work of the elders, in the days of the apostles; for we are told, that the Christians in Antioch, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Now, as the apostles made over the ministration of the saints to the care of deacons, that they might give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, it seems evident that these elders ruled rather than preached. Be this as it may, the duty of the office is clearly, in our times, to act as overseers of the charities of the Church."

"But, Herbert, would not this clash with the agencies of the different Boards of the Church?"

"With the agents? Yes. With the Boards? No. It is for this very object of strengthening church effort, and at the same time obviating the time and money consumed in agencies, that I would most strenuously—as far as my feeble influence can extend—assert the necessity for the eldership taking this department into their own hands.

"They are of the people, and know their ability to give, and would not feel as some ministers have been compelled to do, the fear that every cent devoted to contingent calls was so much deducted from their own meager pittance. It would prevent the minister from having to talk so much about money, and relieve him from many a dilemma when applied to, perhaps most inopportunely, to solicit his people's liberality in behalf of doubtful objects, if he could roll this burthen from him to those who are better fitted to sustain it."

"Well, how would you manage matters on your new organization, Herbert?"

"Ask, rather," exclaimed Mabel, "how he has managed them; for the plan has been actually tried in the congregation, and works well, I assure you."

"That is still more satisfactory; for I confess I like practice better than theory. But I return to the question, how do you arrange your operations?"

"Do not think me an egotist, if I am compelled, in answer to your question, to speak of myself. In the first place, being satisfied of the binding nature of the obligation, I preached at some length on the duty of religious consecration of substance, and scattered among my session and people several popular works on the same subject. On the New Year's day immediately succeeding this previous training, my elders each visited their district—for the congregation had been divided in this manner to prevent confusion—and placed a book in the hands of each of the members, that they might decide on the portion they would

give, the manner of its allotment, and the time when they preferred to be called on; though where this preference did not exist, a weekly or monthly contribution was urged as most in accordance with the apostolic injunction, or rather command. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. These books were arranged for the several Boards of the Church, and every three months all the money brought in was sent to its place of destination; regular accounts being kept by the elder of the district, and receipts given and taken by all the parties."

"Was your salary among the apportionments, Herbert?"

"No; that was secured by a valuation put upon the pews; but of course it was considered as a part of the offerings, though, happily for me, it was not contingent. Well, our amount was small at first, and many were the fears entertained that the church would give less than on the old system; but by degrees the sums to each object were increased, and the advantage of contributing by system, instead of by impulse, and from a sense of obligation rather than

as a matter of caprice, were sensibly discovered. Now, we are considered to be very liberal; the Boards can depend on our quarterly contributions, and no agent is required to drum up our drowsy donors to their work. But the best thing is, that our plan allows all to contribute. If the widow's mite was so acceptable in the days of our Lord, it should not now be overlooked, nor should the poor be debarred from participating in that luxury which the rich so often are disposed to monopolize, the luxury of doing good. Even the Bible-classes and Sabbath-school children are encouraged to contribute; and as Mabel takes charge of this branch of the business, it would do you good to watch the importance with which each little hand deposits the pennies in the 'sacred sugar-bowl'—an immense old relic brought from Magnolia Grove, I believe, and reserved for this sole purpose. When the article is full, a vote is taken as to the use to which it is to be appropriated; and Mabel generally contrives a little treat on the occasion, such as a walk to the grove, a

simple supper, or a regale on fruit and gingerbread. But another subject which I should like to point out to ruling elders as their appropriate province, if not a bounden duty, is the charge of the religious literature of the church. There is often a disadvantage in the ignorance of business, which ministers suffer from so much, if they go out of their peculiar province; and if not disabled by sickness from performing the functions of their own profession, all the time devoted to editorship is lost to the church. For many reasons, a layman is better fitted to jostle his way in the world, and attend to those details and pecuniary items which are essential to success in this department."

"I fear you will supercede the preaching elder altogether, Herbert, if you go much further with your reforms."

"No danger. My aim is to make him more efficient by enabling him to concentrate his energies on his own appropriate vocation. But I see that Edith is consulting her watch, and I will therefore mention the

only remaining duty of the eldership belonging to this class, which I propose to enlarge on—I mean that of church-extension. This is one of those plans of doing good which seems of all others to require lay co-operation. No doubt it has often devolved on the minister; but he always works to a disadvantage when not accompanied by one or two active ruling elders; for, be it remembered, *bricks and mortar do not make a church.* The building may be erected, *perhaps*, without a debt being incurred—though unfortunately this is seldom the case—hearers may be attracted, a Sabbath-school commenced, and all appear promising; but without a session of piety and vigour, there is little hope of ultimate success. This kind of missionary undertaking is of itself so disheartening, so different from the regular ministration to a settled congregation, that a pastor needs all the encouragement that can be given him; and stronger churches should not grudge him an elder or two just because they dislike to part with efficient men themselves."

"I think that it must be very trying to preach to an unsettled *omnium-gatherum* kind of people."

"It must indeed, Neville. The migratory habits of the suburban population of our large towns is of itself a great impediment to the growth and prosperty of a church. I have known such an one, in which the first of April brought annually a striking change in the aspect of the congregation; so that while the admission of members was constant, there was little increase to the standing number. Then their poverty prevents their doing much to support the gospel."

"It is to be hoped that the revelations of the great day of retribution will bring to light the fruits of labours so self-denying as those you have alluded to; and I do think that able churches should be willing to spare both men and money to build up these waste places of Zion."

"I have lately heard of a plan for church-extension which would combine many advantages. It is this: let the money raised in a Presbytery as a fund for this object, be

loaned to infant congregations for a given term of years, without interest; if they prosper as they ought, they will be able for a second period to pay the interest annually, and at the end of this time they should be expected to refund the principal, which should immediately be applied to assist some other church that requires help. I will complete the enumeration of the duties of the eldership at another opportunity, and thus allow you to resume your seat by poor Nannie."

"Thank you for your consideration, brother," replied Edith; "we shall attend all the better for this kindness of yours. And if it is any compliment, be assured that I, for one, am very much interested in your discussion; and sincerely hope that Neville will profit by it." So saying, she glided to the sick child's bed, but no cheering symptom greeted her approach. The delirium had now subsided into a lethargy even more distressing than her bursts of excitement; and the doctor's grave looks convinced the anxious parents that Nannie was in a situa-

tion of the greatest peril. For several days this state of things continued, during which the watchful parents continued to make use of every remedy prescribed, though with but little hope of her recovery. A constant communication was kept up with the children, by means of Herbert, who on this account forbore from entering the chamber of disease. Mrs. Lindsay's care had been successful in preserving the health of her precious charge; but Fannie had manifested such deep and enduring grief, that this lady began to fear that it would be productive of serious injury to her. "If I could only go to see her, but for a minute!" she would exclaim; and her petitions to this effect were so urgent, that at last Herbert promised to induce her parents to consent to the meeting. One difficulty, however, arose, and that was, whether it would be safe for her to return to the children. At last she was told of all the hazard to herself which would be incurred by a visit, and informed that if she went to Violet Vale, she must remain there, to prevent danger to the younger ones. "I

hardly feel as if we were doing right to leave this matter to her decision," said her father, "and yet I know the lesson will be so forcible that I cannot tell how to omit it. May the Lord overrule all for good!"

In pursuance of this plan, the subject of Fannie's return to her sister was left to her own choice, and she gladly accepted the offer. Never was a greater contrast displayed than was to be found in her behaviour now from what it had been formerly. The proud and haughty mien was now exchanged for the deepest dejection, and instead of the rudeness formerly manifested to her parents, there was a touching humbleness and affection, as pleasing to them as unlooked for. "Is there any hope, mother?" was her first question. "Yes, my child, while there's life there's hope," returned Edith, striving against her own forebodings to encourage the penitent girl. "Thank God for that!" she exclaimed. "How shall I pay you, mother, for all your goodness?—but if she only gets well, I will never grieve her again." Nor was her sorrow shown by

looks and words only; Edith found her the most willing and quiet little assistant in running errands and performing such services as were in her power. At other times, she sat with Mabel, who went on with her lessons as Mrs. Lindsay had done, or helped Herbert as he worked in the garden at such matters as were suited to her age and strength. In short, the amendment was so visible that Edith whispered to her husband, "If Nannie is but spared to us, we shall yet have reason to rejoice in this affliction for Fannie's sake." This was now the absorbing question—was that fair and opening bud of immortality to expand in vigour and grow in life, or was it to be crushed beneath the heavy hand of death? By slow degrees the fever yielded to the skill of the physician and the watchfulness of the attendants; and little by little her strength returned; the children were recalled, and the house of mourning was changed into one of thanksgiving and joy.

CHAPTER VI.

DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP CONTINUED.

"Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

As soon as family matters had returned to their usual routine, Mr. Neville urged Herbert to recommence his instructions on the eldership, adding, "We must soon leave your hospitable roof, and I want to receive all the benefit I can before we go."

"Well then," answered the young pastor, "we will go on at the usual time this evening."

The accustomed hour returned, finding the gentlemen on their favourite piazza; Mrs. Lindsay was already seated, with Ellen at her side; Nannie, stretched on a sofa in the parlour, was placed near enough to the open window to enjoy the evening breeze; while Fannie gently fanned her, often stoop-

ing to kiss the pale cheek of her sister; and Edith, though attending to the conversation, kept close watch on the invalid. Herbert commenced as follows: "We are now about to speak of those duties which devolve on elders as such, and which directly respect their official appointment. These are performed by elders individually, or in their collective and sessional capacity. I will first mention some of the first class. In every congregation there should be defined districts, placed under the charge of each elder. These should not be so large as to be burthensome, or encroach too much on the time of the elders, and therefore it is better, when they do not include more than twenty-five or thirty families. Each elder is to be furnished with a district book, which should contain the bounds of the district, with its localities, the names of the members, their places of residence, and occupation, together with the number and ages of the children. To this might be added any peculiarity in their history or circumstances. Some degree of attention is needed to correct this

memorandum from time to time, as to removals, &c., but the plan is practicable, and will be found highly advantageous. It will be especially useful to have this book well and accurately kept, to perform another duty of the most imperative nature—that the elder may visit his district statedly."

"Why surely, brother," said Edith, "it would be enough if the elder visited with the pastor, without engaging in it alone."

"A little reflection, my dear sister, will convince you that this will not suffice. The minister is certainly bound to inspect all the congregation; but this process takes a long time, and these periodical calls are indeed few and far between. The elder, in his small district, is differently circumstanced, and can, without much loss of time, visit all the families under his charge, every six months. These visits must be duly reported to the session. Formality is not essential to this intercourse, which should be decidedly more familiar and social than pastoral visitation. A large and flourishing church, well known to my mother, as she has often

told me, received great benefit from the faithfulness of an elder's visits."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lindsay; "few young pastors were better sustained by an energetic session, than the late Dr. D., before he swerved from the doctrines of the Confession of Faith. If a well known face were absent from the sanctuary, one of these faithful watchmen was sure to visit the individual on Monday, to learn the cause; and the knowledge of this had a powerful effect in enforcing punctuality of attendance."

"It is objected to our system," returned Herbert, "that we do not know enough of each other, nor perform those injunctions of Holy Writ, as regards 'exhorting one another,' 'considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works,' with many others of a like import; now this visiting of the elders will enable them to meet this difficulty. Nor need it be feared that such an one will meet with a cold reception; let the trial be made, and it will soon be found by the cordial smile and friendly greeting, that

these moments are not spent in vain. For, a short call, a friendly inquiry, where there is not time for more, will at least keep bright the chain of connection between the church members and their chosen superintendents. But there are three classes that more especially call for the notice of the ruling elder in his visits. First, the sick. How highly prized are the attentions of the session in sickness and suffering! and how much good can be done by a judicious performance of this good work! How often may temporal counsel and aid be added to religious consolation!

"The idea of being forgotten by our spiritual guides, in our affliction, is inexpressibly painful; and often the season when good might be effected is misimproved, while the progress of disease curtails the time for instruction or advice, till perhaps the thread of life is cut, ere the process of preparation for a better world had even commenced. Friends may be unwilling to suggest the dismal possibility of a fatal termination to disease; but the elder, by his prayers, his

teaching, and his reading of Scripture, may be blessed in his endeavours to lead the mind to the great physician, Christ Jesus.

"Well do I remember a case, of a very interesting young girl, whose mother was a real Christian, but timid, and discouraged by the opposition of her husband to religion; and during all the illness of the daughter, neither pastor nor elder ever called to inquire into her hopes, or admonish her of an impending eternity; so that, except the conversation and prayers of the mother, no effort for the conversion of her immortal soul was made. If we see Romanists pressing with the most disgusting officiousness to palm their unmeaning ceremonies on all to whom they can lay the slightest claim, should not Christian elders emulate their zeal, and strive 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction?'"

"But," observed Mr. Neville, "we often find physicians object to the attendance of pious people, or the introduction of prayer for the sick."

"We do, and sometimes even good men

are not judicious in their efforts at the bedside of illness. Let the elder, then, study to time his visits rightly, to have his 'words few and well chosen,' and to soothe and interest, rather than to excite or to alarm the sufferer. But a second class are backsliders. This dangerous state has often small beginnings; and if these are watched for, and faithfully represented to the offender, we cannot doubt but that the happiest results would follow. Absence from church and prayer-meetings, a lax state of family discipline, and above all, intemperance, have sometimes been the entering wedge to all that debasement and disgrace, which belongs to an abandonment of privilege and hope. I am well aware, that the greatest tenderness and care are necessary, if we would comply with the injunction—'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;' but if the attempt were more frequently made, in that meek, prayerful spirit which the work requires, we might hope for the fulfilment of the promise—'Brethren, if any of you do err from the

truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' The third class that demands particular attention from the elder, are the young. If there be a parochial school attached to the church, it seems very natural to have it placed under the control of the session; but independent of this, the catechizing and Sabbath-school instruction of the lambs of the flock, might well require the supervision of the overseers of the church. I remember one instance, in which the session was called on for rather an unusual exercise of their vigilance. Mother, you know what I refer to. Perhaps you will tell Neville about the little prayer-meeting?"

"With pleasure, my son. The prayer-meeting you refer to, was commenced by a few girls, of twelve or thirteen years of age, and afterwards was increased to upwards of twenty. My observations, however, are more especially to refer to its originators. These children all belonged to a cotton-fac-

tory; and to so late an hour was their attendance there required, that they were compelled to do without supper, if they went to the prayer-meeting. But their suppers were not the only offering made at the shrine of duty; though this, after a long day's work in the close atmosphere of their scene of labour, was no trifling one. They were all members of the Sabbath-school, and afterwards nearly all joined the church; their uniting together for prayer was entirely their own act, and they were all expected to take an active part in turn.

"For a while, no one knew of their meetings, but at length they applied to one of the elders to form them into a society, auxiliary to the Western Foreign Missionary Society. This was done, and they made their pastor a life member, by a weekly subscription from their earnings at the mill, of six cents per week. After this, the elders and pastor often attended their meetings, without, however, interfering with their manner of proceeding. It was my privilege to be with them occasionally, and I can truly

say that I never felt more delighted, than when I heard their fervent petitions for their minister—then confined to his bed with dangerous illness—took part in their songs of praise, or witnessed their devout and orderly behaviour. One of the most prominent of their number was a girl named Isabella Kennedy, who was early called to the upper sanctuary; it has always been matter of regret to me, that her ardent, humble piety, had not been made more fully known, by the publication of her memoirs, as it might have been useful to the humble class of life in which her lot was cast, and which is generally found to be so adverse to active, vital religion. But I doubt not that her 'record is on high.'"

"It is rather uncommon to have such piety showed by factory children, is it not, aunt?"

"It certainly is, Edith; but their whole conduct was as consistent in the mill as at the prayer-meeting, and they were held up as models by all who knew them. Four of them, to my knowledge, witnessed a good

confession on a dying bed; the others I have not had an opportunity of hearing of for some years past."

"Another duty which rests with the elder, either individually or unitedly with others," continued Herbert, "is the holding of social meetings for prayer, in his own district. These, if taken to the houses of members, will generally attract the neighbours, and thus much good may be brought to people's own doors. In one instance, this plan was resorted to with such success, that a promising colony—if I may so call it—was formed, without the pastor's having at all assisted in its organization.

"In times of religious excitement, this kind of meeting is very useful; and as the minister will always be a welcome visitor, he may, by attending in rotation, always meet with one of these praying circles, and give them the advantage of his presence and instructions. But I must hasten over this part of my subject, and consider the duties of elders in session assembled.

"And the first remark I would make is,

that their meetings should be frequent. Once a month is as seldom as is consistent with due watchfulness over the interests of the church. I know a congregation in which, on a stated day, the pastor and elders take tea together at the house of one in rotation, monthly; these social meetings are well fitted for that friendly intercourse so needful to their efficiency as a whole. As large a portion of the sittings as possible, should be employed in religious exercises; for it never ought to be forgotten, that keeping up the life of faith in their own hearts, is the only way by which their influence over others can be sustained.

"Secondly: The acts of the session should be regularly recorded, much after trouble is saved, by order and method at first. But besides the ordinary session book, it seems desirable to have a congregational record, compiled from the district books of the elders, which shall at one glance give a statement of the situation of the congregation; and which must be rectified and corrected from time to time. One of the particular

items of this record should be, the number, age, and circumstances, of the baptized youth of the church. To this class—so tenderly reccommended by our Lord, and so accessible to pastoral care and spiritual nurture—too little care has been given by the officers of the Lord's house. Is our baptism merely a ceremony? or have the prayers and guardianship of the church no meaning in our ears? Were prayer for, and instruction of, these dear youth more prominently called up to the church's attention, we should not have to mourn as we may now, over those stray lambs who have forsaken our safe enclosures, for other denominations, more alluring to the senses.

"Thirdly: It is the duty of elders to admit communicants to the fellowship of the church. This is an arduous and responsible function, and demands the utmost circumspection; especially in these days of profession: for while it is injudicious to refuse the children's bread to those who possess a right to it, it is a great mistake to fill the church with nominal professors—worldly-

minded, pleasure-seeking, or money-loving *saints.*"

"That last epithet, does not accord with those that precede it, Herbert."

"Alas! no; and how often is the conjunction found, as far at least as profession goes; for we know a real Christian is not of this description. It is the duty of the session to examine candidates for church privileges, on their knowledge in religious subjects. So great is the remissness on this head, that one might almost think that Presbyterians endorsed the Papist axiom, that 'ignorance is the mother of devotion.' So foreign, however, is this theory to our system, that it never can be amalgamated with it; and the unlearned are of necessity unstable, also. The admirable form of 'sound words' in use among us, has been too much considered as applicable only to children; whereas there is no one too well informed, to benefit by its well-connected chain of doctrines and precepts.

"It was well said by a candidate for the ministry, when asked where he had acquired

his theological information—'I learned it at my father's knee:' for it is only in early life, that the memory can readily acquire that furniture which is needed in the conflicts of after years. But the session should inquire into the faith of those who ask admission to the church. Here is a question of great difficulty; they who come forward with a glowing experience, are not always the most eminent Christians, while sometimes the youth or diffidence of the applicant, makes the work of examination almost nominal."

"And yet," said Mrs. Lindsay," these trembling believers are as precious to their Master, as if they had the fluency and confidence of an undoubting Christian."

"No doubt of that, dear mother, and such should be tenderly dealt with. But the session must inquire also about the repentance, love, and new obedience, of those who would unite with them, for all these are of vital importance.

"It is also desirable, that the session impresses on the minds of applicants, that there

are duties to be done, as well as truth to be believed. A regular attendance on public worship and social religious meetings; and punctual attention to family worship—when they are heads of families—and piety at home; an adherence to temperance, and a conscientious appropriation of substance to the Lord; these should be insisted on as the bounden duty of those who would be freemen in that household of faith, where the word of God is the charter of our rights, and Heaven itself the inheritance provided for us. This too is the time, while the candle of the Lord shines brightly, to call on the young communicant to engage in prayer, in the social meetings of the district, or the church. Few would dare refuse at such a period, when the feelings are ardent and the hearts alive to every call of duty. But it also belongs to the session to administer church discipline. This is a most important part of their official trust, and too often neglected. The garden of the Lord cannot prosper, if noxious weeds are allowed to grow among the plants of grace, and mere

objurgatory denunciations from the pulpit ill supply the want of this faithful guardianship. The shame and scandal of an open trial must always, if possible, be avoided, because the government of the church is of a parental character, always based on the voluntary subjection of its members to those who are set over them in the Lord."

"I have heard of some ministers who, when their members acted inconsistently, read them out of the church, as it is called, without warning or process."

"Such pastors showed their utter ignorance of the regulations of our system; but lenity and blind submission to prevailing follies are more usual than a contrary extreme. It is very much to be wished that a session should be characterized by unanimity in their decisions, and that entire silence be observed as to matters transacted by them when assembled for official purposes; nor should they, even after sentence for his offence has been pronounced on the erring brother, lose sight of him, but endeavor by every proper method to win him back to the

friendship of the church. I have sometimes seen a spirit of favoritism in church censures that seemed akin to the one James reproves in his epistle, (chap. ii.) when a poor man given to intemperance was made to stand and be rebuked before the assembled church, while richer drunkards were passed by in silence and impunity. In a word, on the efficient and prudent discharge of the power of the keys, hang results more momentous than can lightly be appreciated. Mother you remember the case of our unhappy friend?"

"I do, my son and have heard him most feelingly deplore that decision of the session which shut him out from the privileges of the church—for no crime or inconsistency—but because he felt it his duty to commune occasionally with another denomination to which his wife belonged. The consequences of this rash act of the session were fatal to his Christian character, for he was not happy in that society which it had cost him so dear to unite with occasionally; and all return to his own church was precluded by

the narrow policy of the elders, for the minister did not coincide in their opinion."

"Another duty incumbent on the elders, is to insure a full representation of their body in the church judicatories, and ecclesiastical boards. As business men, their co-operation is often of immense utility to the pastors, and as co-ordinate with them in their powers of ruling, it is unkind in them to slip out of this responsibility on the plea of want of time; as if the work of the minister were not as engrossing and as pressing as theirs. It is time that the eldership arouse to a sense of their duty in this respect, and be no longer considered as mere adjuncts and echoes to their pastors."

"You would not have the lay representatives engross all the debating, I hope, Herbert?"

"Far from it, Neville; but to judge from present appearances, there is no fear of that extreme. On the contrary, they are more addicted, when they do attend church courts, to subside into mere voters, and that too, on the same side generally as the minister,

leaving the argumentary part of the business entirely to the black-coats. And this, when from their position, experience, and general information, they might so materially assist in disposing of the questions which arise from time to time in ecclesiastical bodies. But Edith's anxious face warns me that she thinks it time for Nannie to go to bed; and Fannie and Ellen have been so quiet, that they deserve a game at romps as a reward."

"I can play now with pleasure," said Fannie, "when Nannie is getting better, and you have all forgiven me for my badness."

"It will be forgotten, too," answered her pleased father, "if you continue to be like your present self; but I will carry the poor sick child up stairs, and then you may make as much racket as you choose. I believe," he continued in a lower tone to Edith, "that your way was the best with that girl, after all; but, depend upon it, every step-mother has not so much forbearance."

"Every wife has not so good a husband, nor are her efforts appreciated like mine,"

was Edith's reply; "but let us cease complimenting each other, to adore that gracious Power, which has not only preserved our child, but protected the rest from that malignant fever."

CHAPTER VII.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDERSHIP.

"If any be blameless."

THE next evening came, and the family party were again collected as usual, Fannie taking her post by her sister as before, and Ellen as usual close to her beloved grandmother. The newly commenced reformation in the character of the elder twin might, to ordinary observers, appear too rapid to be lasting; but Mrs. Lindsay and Mabel encouraged her parents by their conviction, that the change in her conduct was radical. "Do not consider, sister," said the latter, "in what unfavourable circumstances the poor child was placed. From what I have

heard of her aunt, there seems to have been no system pursued, but a course of injudicious indulgence, with occasional contradiction—equally misplaced—interspersed with that deception so frequently practised, as the shortest plan with children, but which Fannie was too acute not to find out. Prejudiced against us all, she came here in an antagonistic spirit, but the terrible consequences of her violence to poor Nannie, and the conciliatory and maternal tone you have adopted, have evidently produced a complete revolution in her feelings; and I doubt not that she will decline her aunt's offer, if it be left to her decision."

Mabel here referred to a letter, received from Miss Lushington, which announced her intention of sending the nurse for Fannie, to accompany her in the summer jaunt she contemplated. Nannie was, she wrote, too weak she supposed, to be of the party, but might return to them when the excursion had been completed. This offer Mr. and Mrs. Neville communicated to their eldest daughter, who rejected it with some feeling.

"Does aunt think," she exclaimed, "that I would leave you all for any pleasure party she can propose? No, mother; do not send me from you, but teach me to be good like you and aunt Mabel; and indeed, I never will be so naughty again as I have been."

This appeal could not be rejected; and Mr. Neville informed his sister-in-law that her nieces themselves desired, as he himself and Mrs. Neville had long wished, that they should dwell under the paternal roof. But to return from this long digression to the party who were awaiting Herbert's communications;—seeing them all settled in their places, he thus began: "It is evident, that if my views of the importance, authority, and duties of the ruling elder are correct, the qualifications for this office are of no trifling kind. The first I will mention, is active, heart-felt piety. This is so manifestly called for, in spiritual rulers, that it might seem unnecessary to insist upon it, did we not often see men elected to this office, who are more conspicuous for wealth, respectability of position, learning, or talents, than for

devotedness to the cause of Christ. Wo to the pastor, or the people, who expect any of the above-mentioned advantages, to compensate for the want of this vital ingredient of official character! It were better — in the words of an opposer of our form of government — 'that they dubbed, here a godly webster, there a sanctified cobbler, ruling elders;' for the weaver and the shoemaker, if 'godly' and 'sanctified,' would be more useful in the church than a judge, member of Congress, general, or other dignitary, if deficient in this indispensable requisite. But their piety ought to be of a childlike, experimental kind. Mere orthodoxy, however desirable, will not suffice for one who has to deal with the consciences of men, and dispense or withhold the privilege of church communion. Office-bearers are perhaps too liable to take their own piety for granted, from the very fact of their being such; forgetting that, as past attainments will not avail for present emergencies, so we must come day by day for the spiritual manna, even as the Israelites

in the wilderness sought, at the appointed time, for their heaven-provided sustenance."

"I suppose," said Edith, "you mean to inculcate the importance of prayer."

"That was indeeed my intention, sister; as I know not a class of men to whom a spirit of prayer is more necessary than that we are speaking of. In general, they are actively engaged in secular pursuits, with every avenue to wealth and fame stretching wide before them; and therefore it is that they require constant counter influence, to maintain their Christian warfare with any hope of success. But piety alone is not enough to meet the requisitions of the elder's high calling—there must be knowledge also. This is the more important, because the functions of his duty, varied as they are, demand that he who would perform them be like a 'scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.' To this knowledge, an intelligent acquaintance with the standards of our faith, materially conduces. How can any rule well, who is not familiar with those institutions that are the foundation of gov-

ernment? Or how can he be an overseer, who knows not the mind of his great employer?

"Doctrinal orthodoxy, however, does not take in the whole idea here intended. It is necessary to form part of that 'knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' in which Christians are exhorted to grow; but there is much else that cannot be dispensed with. A practical knowledge of the Bible is of immense value to the ruling elder. He should be 'mighty in the Scriptures,' to be able to address 'a word in season to him that is weary,' to instruct the ignorant, to repel error, and to comfort the afflicted. Knowledge of human nature is of great use to the ruling elder; without this, he is unfit to form a right judgment of the different individuals with whom he has to deal; and it is the more so, because ministers being often theoretical men, need the practical wisdom of their lay coadjutors. A knowledge of their own heart, in all its trials, temptations, and besetments, is also very important,

to one who is to decide on the fitness for privilege, or the evidences of conversion."

"I fear there are few elders that will come up to your requisitions, Herbert."

"Are they then unreasonable, or too highly drawn?"

"I cannot say they are, but I repeat, that few can be found so well adapted to the work."

"If it be so, perhaps the cause is, that the standard of an elder's qualifications has not been made high enough. Where little is expected, there is generally little done; but if the churches and the elders themselves have taken low views of the office, the only way to remedy the evil is to fix the estimate at a more correct elevation. It is important, also, that he who ruleth should be sound in the faith; this may seem to have been anticipated in the preceding requisite, under the idea of doctrinal knowledge; but the matter is so essential to the guardians of the church, that even at the risk of being thought guilty of tautology, I will enlarge on it, as a separate qualification. Paul warns the elders of

Ephesus of the danger of false doctrine. 'Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears.' This watchfulness is still required; but without that soundness in the faith which I recommend, how shall error, insidious as it is, be detected and exposed?

"The ministry may be led away by a fondness for novelty, and a love of theological metaphysics, to forsake the good old paths; but while the elders are sound in the faith, there is still hope that their influence may control that which is adverse to the truth.

> But a sound eldership, the churches' pride,
> If once destroyed, can never be supplied.
>
> [*Burns altered.*]

And never, if the guides are turned out of the way, can we expect the people to follow on to know the Lord. This feature of character is the more essential, because elders have, in Presbyteries and other ecclesiasti-

cal bodies, to give their vote as to the exercises of students, the trial sermons of licentiates, the examination of ministers on entering the Presbytery, &c., &c., all which require an intimate acquaintance with our discriminating doctrines.

"But neither piety nor knowledge will suffice to make an elder; no, not the two, combined with soundness in the faith. Consistency is a quality especially called for in an office like the one of which we are now talking. This, you may remember, is that trait of character so much insisted on in Miss Hannah More's Cœlebs in the choice of a wife; and it is a prominent ingredient in the piety of all thriving Christians. Consistency is that union of holy tempers and godly principles, which keeps the soul from going to any of those extremes that falsify the profession it has made; preventing our zeal from degenerating into bigotry, or our charity from sliding into indifference to the truth. A consistent person does not by his actions at one time contradict his words at another;

but is always the same, influenced by similar motives, and acting by a given rule."

"You would have us then, Herbert—

'Keep one consistent plan, from end to end.'"

"I would, brother; especially those who aspire to the office we are treating of. But another requisite for the eldership, is that quality which Paul calls 'aptness to teach.' This, as Mabel will remember, was, in my conversations with Edwin on the pastoral functions, defined to be, fit to teach; by having good knowledge of the things to be taught, a clear manner of expressing thought, and an earnest desire to instruct the ignorant. The importance of this gift to an instructor is self-apparent. A man may have great learning, who is not skilful in communicating information; while another, not much more advanced in learning than his pupils, may alternately instruct himself and teach them, with such good success as to advance them rapidly. With children, especially in religious teaching, there ought to be great pains taken to *interest* as well as *inform*. A peculiar talent

is required to gain their attention and acquire their love; and well is he repaid who seeks to gain the respect and affection of this most interesting class of beings. Their Maker's image is not wholly obliterated by actual sin—their hearts are tender, for the indurating process of the world has hardly commenced; our Saviour took them in his arms, and blessed them; yea, he was himself a little child."

"This planet would be a dreary abode, without these little prattlers," said Mrs. Lindsay, kissing Ellen as she spoke; "and I cannot bear to see them either ruined by false indulgence, or made the victims of tyranny and caprice."

"The elder, however," resumed her son, "should be apt to teach others besides children. Classes for Biblical instruction might often be formed of adults, to great advantage; for there is this peculiarity about our system, that without some familiarity with divine truth, the mind cannot relish or digest the spiritual food. Just as in the animal frame, there must be assimilation before

there can be nutrition. Besides this, in exhorting at prayer-meetings, or visiting the sick, and in many other ways, this gift—for I consider it such—is equalled only in value by the one I shall next advert to—the gift of prayer."

"You own, then," said Mr. Neville, "that all do not possess this talent?"

"Not to an equal degree, certainly; but few, even if characterized by ever so little learning or intellect, may not become acceptable in their petitions at a throne of grace. Here, 'practice makes perfect;' the habit of fervent, heart-felt prayer to our heavenly Father will, by realizing his presence, hinder all that embarrassment resulting from a fear of man, or the hidden pride of our own hearts. You remember the anecdote of the soldier, who had retired for prayer to some sequestered spot, and was taken up as a deserter. Having alleged the reason for his going to his hiding-place, the commander desired him, if he was used to pray, to give him a specimen of his exercises. The soldier complied, and prayed so pertinently and

feelingly, that his general at once acquiesced in the truth of his statement; remarking to the sneering comrades round, 'that a man who could use such freedom in his approaches to his Maker, was not likely to flinch from fear of death or danger.'

"Another requisite to this office I will mention, is the command of time. This, no doubt, is much more under our own control than we are willing to admit; for we always find leisure to gratify a strong propensity, or compass a favourite design. But though method and diligence may do much to expedite matters, the eldership requires a greater degree of attention than can be taken from the scrapings and parings of our time. Let, then, none undertake it, who are not willing to devote to it as much of their thoughts and moments as its functions demand; remembering, as they ought, that life is given to us, not merely for secular engrossments, but to 'show forth the praises of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.'"

"I own to you, Herbert, that I now feel

self-condemned, form the flimsy excuses I have made to my own conscience, to excuse my non-performance of those religious observances which have at all interfered with worldly business; and did I not confide so entirely in Edith's horror of treachery, I might almost suspect she had told you how often she has gone to our prayer-meetings unattended, because I thought I could not leave my counting-house."

"Be assured, dear brother, I have had no hint of your delinquincy on this score, but have spoken merely on general principles, though it seems you have made the application. If you would try the experiment, however, I doubt that you would find that praying time is not lost time; and that you would return to your employment with a lighter heart, and more real enjoyment, than if you had not left them at the call of duty. In punctuality of attendance on religious meetings, our sex may take a lesson from the other. How often do we see women, weak and delicate as they are, bowed down by family cares, and disturbed at night by

fractious infants, always in their places; even if the hours thus spent must be made up from those devoted to rest, or at the expense of labour and exertion in their previous arrangements.

"The last qualification I shall enumerate, is one insisted on by Paul—having 'a good report of them that are without.'

"Much as the world hates religion, it yet has sufficient discernment to respect its sincere and consistent votaries; and if an individual labours under general odium and dislike, we may be sure there is some reason for it. When, therefore, a devoted man commands the esteem of his fellow-citizens, he can exercise a much more beneficial influence, than one who is viewed with suspicion or distrust. Do not, however, so far mistake me, as to suppose I advocate that popularity-hunting spirit which may do for intriguing politicians, but which is the very antipodes of the open, manly tone of Christian candour. No! the best way to ensure the good opinion of others, is to act with plainness, integrity, and kindness on

all occasions, irrespective of what A, B, or C may think of us."

"I have always thought it a bad sign, Herbert, of a man's true standing, when the poor think ill of him."

"It is indeed a truer criterion than the praises of those whom it is more our interest to flatter and conciliate. I have always admired the delicacy of a compliment, paid by one of this class, to the memory of a citizen, whose frame dwelling stood unconsumed in the midst of the ruins of an extensive conflagration. Some person heard another remark to the man I have alluded to, that it was wonderful this building should have been spared, when newer edifices of brick had been destroyed. 'Not at all,' replied he, 'for the *poor man's friend* lived there.' But my watchful wife is getting fidgetty, I see, and doubtless has many Martha-like cares to call for her attention; so I will conclude this branch of my subject in the words of the royal preacher, 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.'"

"Now husband," said Mabel, "you know better than that comes to. It is about little Nannie I am anxious. My day's work is done before this time I hope, but she has to take her tonic, and go to bed."

"Well then, I will carry her up stairs, to make up for my mistake."

"You may, but you must come down again," said his mother, "to hear Fannie read a chapter in the Testament to her father."

"That I will, with great pleasure; and rejoice that she has benefitted so much by your instructions, mother."

The chapter was read, and Mr. Neville, kissing his daughter, said, "If my little girl only goes on as she has commenced, she will make progress in all it is desirable for her to learn."

"And I am so much happier than ever I was before, father; thank you a thousand times for the step-mother you have given us."

CHAPTER VIII.

ELECTION AND ORDINATION OF ELDERS.

"By the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery."

As the time approached for the separation of the happy party at Violet Vale, Edith and her husband became still more desirous to investigate the subject which had so much interested them; and no occupation, however pleasant, was allowed to interfere with the conversations of the evening. The children even, though of course much of what was said could not be intelligible to them, had acquired the habit of quiet attention, and a relish for the company of the older part of the family, that seemed to indemnify them for the silence to be observed. At an early hour, therefore, the party assembled in the parlour, as a copious shower had driven them in from the piazza.

"I hope, Herbert," said Mr. Neville, "to hear your opinion about the propriety of

imposition of hands, in the ordination of ruling elders."

"My subject for to-night includes that very point, brother; but the election of these officers must first be attended to."

"There is no mention made of the election of elders by the people, in the New Testoment, brother," said Edith.

"There is not, I allow; though as the deacons were chosen by the people, or 'looked out'—that is, selected accurately and diligently, in order to choose the best—we may, I think, conclude, that the elders were appointed by the people in like manner. More especially, as Moses, when recounting to the Israelites the Lord's dealings to them in the wilderness, speaks in reference to those officers who were to assist him in judgment, as follows: 'Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.' In the Hebrew it reads, 'Give ye,' that is, 'present unto me, such persons as you think fit to be rulers.' Thus they chose them, and he approved them. That this method was

pursued in the erection of Christian churches by the apostles, seems beyond a doubt, if we reflect on the term used, (Acts xiv. 23,) translated *ordained*, (χειροτονέω,) which literally signifies, to elect or choose to office by lifting up of hands; and which in a parallel passage is rendered chosen. (2 Cor. viii. 9.) That this was the primitive manner of proceeding, the following references testify.

"Peter Martyr, a learned Italian reformer, in his commentary on 1 Cor. xii. 28, says, 'There were joined with him (*i. e.* the pastor) in the ancient Church, certain elders, chosen from among the people, well-informed, and skilled in spiritual things, who formed a kind of parochial senate.' Dean Nowell also, in his Catechism, drawn up in 1562, expressly mentions elders being chosen, that is, ecclesiastical rulers, who conducted and maintained the discipline of the Church, in concurrence with the pastor. Ursinus, a learned German divine, contemporary with Luther and Melancthon, speaks as follows—'Elders are ministers elected by the voice of the church, to assist in conducting discipline,

and to order a variety of necessary matters in the church.' Examples of the same language might be repeated, but enough has been said to show the opinion of the learned."

"The Waldenses and Bohemians seem to have transmitted this office to the Reformed Churches, Herbert."

"They have. In the Plan of Government and Discipline of the latter Church, we hear of elders, who 'are honest, grave men, chosen out of the whole congregation, that they may act as guardians of all the rest. But the next thing to be considered is, Who are the proper electors of ruling elders?"

"I should say, that none but members of the church can have a voice on the subject;" said Mr. Neville.

"I fully agree with you, brother;" rejoined Herbert, "it cannot be, that they who do not belong to the church, can control the choice of those rulers who are to represent the spiritual interests of the congregation, even while they do not consider themselves amenable to ecclesiastical juris-

diction. Some, however, extend the privilege to baptized persons who are not in full communion; probably on the ground that ultimately it is expected they will become more closely connected with the church."

"It is not at all, on similar grounds, that pewholders are allowed to vote for the pastor I think," said Edith, "whether they belong to the church or not."

"You are quite right there, sister. In the choice of a pastor, all who contribute to his support are entitled to a voice in the selection; and the fact that the call must pass through the hands of Presbytery, is a security for the propriety of the proceeding. Besides, all who attend preaching, have an interest in the matter, and ought to be consulted; but in the affair of government, which is entirely of a spiritual kind, those only who are professors of religion can be expected to possess sufficient discrimination, to be able to make a suitable nomination."

"Is it usual for the people to vote at large, or on a list of more than the number required, furnished them by the session?"

"The latter plan is the one generally adopted, Neville, and has this advantage, that it meets the wishes of the existing elders and the pastor, while it ensures the free suffrages of the congregation: our Form of Government does not prescribe any definite process, but allows every church to proceed in the manner most approved and in use among them, provided that 'the persons elected be male members in full communion in the church in which they are to exercise their office.' We will now proceed to the question of ordination. It is, I believe, conceded by all, that the elders of the Jewish Synagogue were always ordained by the imposition of hands; and the fact, that this usage is recorded as observed in the setting apart of the deacons—confessedly an inferior grade of church-officers—seems to settle the question, as regards those elders who were to receive double honour for ruling well. It therefore appears to me clearly desirable, that the class we are speaking of should be introduced into the eldership by the laying on of the hands of the parochial

Presbytery; and that any other method is not only unscriptural, but faulty and in bad taste. For though opposed to empty ceremonies and humanly derived forms, we must not forget that there is an extreme diametrically opposite—nay, one to which our rejection of external modes may expose us—that of neglecting the order of God's house, and passing too lightly over the designation to an office so important to best interests of both pastor and people."

"What number of elders do you think then ought to be in a congregation, Herbert?"

"There is little fear of a surplus, Neville, while active male members are so scarce a commodity; and yet mere names do not always constitute strength. Four or five efficient men will do more to uphold a pastor's hands, and advance the Lord's work, than a whole host of lazy go-easy Christians."

"In the Dutch Reformed Church the elders are elected annually, are they not, Herbert?"

"There is a fresh election every year,

though the former session are often re-elected, and are always liable to be called upon, on emergency for their counsel; but in our Church a similar plan has never been adopted, nor does it seem desirable, as it assuredly is not scriptural. 'Once an elder, always an elder,' is an axiom in our Church, beyond dispute. Reasons of a private nature may render it advisable that the exercise of the office may be laid aside, such as removal to a church where the individual is neither well known nor influential, ill health, old age, or the fact of his ceasing to be acceptable to a majority of the church. But this withdrawment from service differs widely from that deposition which is only the re-result of regular constitutional process for some flagrant offence, or heinous error."

"How is it usual to proceed against an elder, in such a case, Herbert?"

"When ruling elders become chargeable with heresy, or immorality, they are arraigned and tried by the church session. Process against them is to be conducted according to the same general rules which

regulate the trials of private members; only that as their office makes their position more important than others, so there ought to be peculiar caution, tenderness, and care, in receiving evidence against them. Thus Paul tells Timothy, 'Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.' If, for any special reason, the parochial church court seems unfitted to give a just decision, the whole matter should at once be put in the hand of the Presbytery, the natural resort, in all cases, in which the church session is unable to perform its accustomed work."

"I suppose the elder, if he feels himself aggrieved, can take up his cause to the Synod?"

"Certainly; and from thence, the next step is the General Assembly, the last court to which appeals may be made. But happily, such derelictions of duty seldom occur, and are even more rare than the departures of the preaching elders from the paths of holiness."

"How do you account for that, Herbert?"

"Simply, because from the nature of things, pastors are exposed to temptations which their compeers in government know nothing about; and because, if they forget where their strength lies, their very elevation makes their fall the greater. But, blessed be God! the number of these 'wandering stars' is small indeed; and, in all modesty be it spoken, the Presbyterian Church in this country may challenge a comparison with any other, as to the purity, laboriousness, and integrity of her ministers."

"I believe you are right, Herbert; but apropos to laboriousness, do tell me how Henry Harrison is coming on, in his preparations for the Theological Seminary? Does he still persist in working his own way unaided?"

"He does; at least as far as pecuniary means are concerned, and will, I doubt not, make an able minister of the New Testament. He visits us very frequently, partly because he loves our counsels, and partly

from another motive. Mabel, how much may we tell of Henry's love affairs?"

"They need not be kept secret from the present company, husband," said Mabel. "You must know," she continued, turning to her sister, "that Henry while here, was very active in our Sabbath-school, and soon became acquainted with the other teachers who attended the prayer-meetings, &c. Among these, was a girl named Rose Martin, who had long been a favourite of dear mother here; and who had to make her way as best she might in an unfriendly world. 'Like finds out like,' they say, and spite of her reserve and his diffidence, they soon understood one another; it is settled that they are to be married, as soon as he is in a state to maintain a wife; and, in the meanwhile, she teaches in the common school all day, and studies hard at night, that he may not, as she says, blush at his wife's ignorance."

"Well," returned Edith, "I am delighted that my old friend has chosen so judiciously. You must take me to see your protegé; and remember, that I undertake to furnish the

bride's wardrobe, whenever it is likely to be needed."

"Thank you, sister, that will indeed delight her heart, for she has a great fear that Henry's grand friends, who have been so kind to him, should not think her worthy his affections."

"When will he have finished his studies?" asked Mr. Neville.

"Very shortly, I believe," said Mrs. Lindsay; "and a finer specimen of American independence, tempered by Christian humility, I have seldom seen. Rose, however, with all her modesty, is deserving of his love, and if their trials in early life have been the means of preparing them for usefulness in God's service, we may surely hope that his blessing will attend their union. But it is time to attend to our little children, as their hour for retiring has come."

"Let me help to put them to bed, grandma," said Fannie; "mother says she can trust me with little Herbert, and he loves me dearly."

"I will take Harcourt," said Nannie, "if

aunt Mabel will let me." Permission being accorded, the procession set foward, while Mr. Neville, looking after them with fond delight, remarked, "Well, if every step-mother had the patience and sweetness of Edith, I do think they would win the hearts of even the sturdiest rebel in the land. For never, surely, was there a greater transformation than is apparent in my once wayward and unmanageable Fannie!"

"You have, indeed, great reason to rejoice, Neville, in the forbearance and judgment which your wife has exhibited; but do not forget that your responsibility is not thereby diminished, nay, you ought to feel the more desire to aid her, in the arduous task which devolves upon you both."

"I will endeavour to do so, Herbert; and if after this memorable visit, I find that the world, or business, or money-making, engross my thoughts, I will come back to the room where I watched at Nannie's sick-bed, and in this peaceful spot, take a fresh lesson of zeal and devotedness from my young instructer."

"I rejoice, at your determination. The position of a second wife, as regards the children of the first, is always a trying one; and it is pusillanimous in a husband, to leave her to bear all the brunt of public opinion, unassisted. Besides, justice to both parties, requires of you, that you are on your guard against either the extreme of indulgence and injudicious expenditure on the one hand, or neglect and harshness on the other, on the part of the mother; just as you are to secure her right to the obedience and affection of your children. In your case, however, the danger of these evils is small. I predict that Fannie's activity of mind will exert the happiest effects on Nannie's amiable disposition; and that both, under Edith's guidance, will become very interesting in their characters and habits."

CHAPTER IX.

ENCOURAGEMENTS OF ELDERS.

"He that waiteth on his master shall be honoured."

THE next morning the two sisters paid their contemplated visit to Rose's school, when Edith was delighted with the order of the children, the neat and pleasing appearance of the teacher, and the gratification expressed at their coming. Mr. Neville had authorized her to hint, that he should do something for the increase of Henry's library, as his share of the business; and this seemed to be as joyful news to the young teacher, as her own bridal attire. Altogether the walk was a very pleasant one, and furnished agreeable converse for the day; but as evening came on, the old subject was resumed by Mr. Neville, who said, "Well Herbert, you have laid out work enough to do for the elder, and fixed the standard of qualification high

enough, in all conscience; cannot you give them some encouragement in their labours?"

"The very thing I had allotted for this evening's conversation. Are you all ready?"

"We are all attention," was the reply, and the pastor thus began. "The first encouragement I shall mention, is, that the Scriptures of truth pronounce the class we are now speaking of, as worthy "of double honour." Our Saviour reproaches the Jews for receiving honour one of another, and seeking not the honour that cometh from God only: and we know, that it is the prevailing tendency of the unrenewed heart, to treasure up earthly distinctions, even if they entail 'shame and everlasting contempt' on their possessor in the world of retribution. But this double honour is of a different character, even like that which the man of God spoke of to poor misjudging Eli; saying, 'Them that honour me, I will honour,' and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' But we will inquire more particularly into some of those things which are included in the term employed. First, the

privilege of working for God. In the several functions of the elder's office, as we have examined them, they all may be comprehended in the idea of labouring in the vineyard of the Lord; and what dignity can be compared to this? Do not the brightest seraphs around his throne burn with the ardour of their love and obedience; and shall not worms of the dust delight to do his will, promote his glory, and serve him in his church? How often do private Christians lament, that they cannot, like the ministry, devote their whole life to God. Now, the eldership gives them an opportunity of subserving his cause; even though their early training or after engagements, may prevent them from becoming pastors. And with humility be it spoken, the preacher can ill sustain his high position, without the aid and sympathy of his brethren of the session; so that the pressing call for more elders, is just as urgent as that for more ministers, for these 'two, are better than one,' because they have a good reward of their labour."

"I should think, that clergymen in self-

defence, would take strong ground in behalf of the eldership," said Edith.

"They would, sister, if they understood the comfort of these props and supporters of the sacred office; and this is just the encouragement I was going to mention, as belonging to ruling elders; namely, that they are the most efficient aids to a pastor, in the performance of his duties. And this is no trifling privilege, when we consider the importance of the pastoral office—the ambassadors of Christ. If a representative of an earthly potentate is to be treated with respect, because of his sovereign's dignity and power, with what delight should we minister to the wants, and promote the comfort of those, who 'beseech us in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God?' None but a pastor can tell the delightful feeling, produced by the consciousness of possessing coadjutors so acceptable, so powerful, and so useful as an active set of elders: and surely the reflex action on their minds must be pleasing; for as we are told, 'he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' But the pastors

are only one class benefited by the eldership; it should be an encouragement to them, to know that they have a right, as Paul said to them of Ephesus, 'to take heed to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.' The pastor needs helpers in the guidance of the sheep, to keep them from straying into danger, and rescue them when fallen from a precipice."

"Papa," interposed Ellen, "I have a picture of a poor little sheep that fell down a great way among the rocks, and a man is going after it, with a rope tied round his body, to keep him from breaking his neck; and mamma said, it was like Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd."

"Your mother was quite right, my little daughter," said her father, stroking her curly head encouragingly; for the child seemed to feel that her interruption was ill-timed, and Nannie's involuntary smile, and Fannie's reproving frown, did not tend to allay her discomposure.

"To this flock," continued Herbert, "it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom—for it, the good Shepherd laid down his life—'and he will give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand.' Think then, if the Saviour did so much for his sheep, whether elders should not take encouragement from the thought, that they are instrumental in leading this flock, in the green pastures, and by the still waters; and this they do, wether by visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, or relieving the distressed; whether by opening the doors of church membership, or by dispensing the elements of our Eucharistic feast. The blessings conferred by the watchful vigilance of these officers, over the purity of the church, it is not easy to estimate aright. 'They watch for your souls as they that must give an account,' and the great day of retribution only, will reveal the good effects of sessional faithfulness and affection.

"But elders should be encouraged by the fact, that not only pastor and people have

reason to rise up and call them blessed; the lambs of the flock are in a great measure committed to their instructions. The benefits accruing from catechetical and Sabbath school instruction, outweigh our estimation."

"Think you, that elders in general, perform all the duty incumbent on them as regards the children of the church, Herbert?"

"I fear Neville, that both elders and pastors, have been sadly negligent in this respect; for were it not the case, we could with difficulty account for the fact, that so many of the children of Presbyterians are to be found in the Methodist, Episcopalian, and even Romish Churches. The mere transmission of membership from father to son, I deprecate, as an evil that would fill our churches with dead professors; but were the obligation of Christian birth-right more clearly enforced by church officers, on both parents and children, we might hope to see fewer interruptions in the lineal descent of piety; knowing as we do, 'that the Lord our God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with those that

love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.' It is worthy of notice, that the first proof required of the repentant Peter that he loved his Master, was obedience to the injunction, "Feed my lambs"—and the Saviour's own tenderness to this most interesting portion of the Creator's work, is showed, not only by his taking them in his arms, blessing them, and declaring that 'of such was the kingdom of Heaven,' but was foretold in the predictions of his coming, when it was said, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."

"It is wonderful to me," observed Mrs. Lindsay," that so little attention is paid to the command of the Saviour just quoted. Childhood and youth are the seed time of life; if the seed of the truth is not then deposited, how can it find room to germinate and grow, amid the allurements and turmoil of later years?"

"With children," continued Herbert, "we cannot too often be reminded of the import-

ance of presenting religion in her own lovely aspect. I do not mean that we are to fritter down the truth it contains, to mere story-books and amusement; but our instructions should be full of love, patience, and forbearance; and our own tempers should manifest fruits of that benign influence of which we tell them. Taught in this way, the Catechism is acquired in a very different spirit from that of the iron rule of former days; while even that mistake was, I own, less to be deplored than the present mode of omitting all distinctive teaching whatever. But a further encouragement to the eldership is, that as they have confessed Christ before men, so will the Son of Man confess them before the angels of God."

"You do not mean, brother, to restrict the benefits of this gracious promise to elders only," said Edith.

"By no means; pastors and private Christians share it with them, but in one sense, it may be said to belong especially to them. For as their good confession is more

direct and open than that of church members at large, so on the other hand, it may count more—at least in the estimation of the world—than that of the clergy. There is an idea prevailing, that what preachers say or do, is in behalf of their profession, and because they derive their support from it; and therefore, when a man of influence and respectability comes out as a witness-bearer for his Lord, such an one is at least free from the imputations cast on a pastor. And this encouragement is needed to cheer the elder in the ungracious task of discipline and government, the wearing exercises of the Sabbath-school, and the pressure of ecclesiastical duty, amid his secular engagements. Let us not grudge it to him then, but for a moment let our minds go forward to that august assembly, when Christ 'shall come in his glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.' That day will bring to light many a result of unostentatious effort here, that shall call forth new manifestations of wonder, love, and praise, to Him who owns the service truly rendered to his Church."

"Oh, husband!" said Edith," I am so glad you have consented to be an elder."

"But there is another encouragement to the ruler in God's house," continued Herbert, "and that is, that his offerings, whether of time or money, are 'a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God.' By this means he makes 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness' and diverts his wealth from being the means of alienation from God, to a channel of safety and spiritual prosperity. In no former period was there the same need of religious effort; and never before, was the same successful result so confidently to be expected. In the days of the tabernacle, when the Jewish nation were called on for their contributions for its adornment, we are told, that the people brought 'more than enough, for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make.' Would there were more of this feeling in the present day; and that the elders, as a body, and according to their means, might appreciate the privilege of being 'able to offer so willingly after this sort.' Nor is

my theory entirely Utopian. One elder at least is known in all the churches; not less by his humility and unpretendingness, than by the liberality with which he imparts his princely revenue to every thing which bears the impress of his Saviour's name. May there be many with his spirit, even if they possess not similar pecuniary resources! And to those who are the poor of this world, rich in faith only, there is this consolation, that if they cannot vie with their wealthy brethren in the amount or extent of their contributions, the time and labour bestowed in the good cause—often taken from their hours of rest, or made up by extra exertions in their secular calling—is just as precious to the Lord of the harvest, as if the silver and the gold were at their disposal also. Here the 'godly webster,' or the 'sanctified cobbler,' stand on equal grounds with the millionaire; nor could the gold of Crœsus, without piety, equal in utility the self-denying exertions of the mechanic or the farmer, when prompted by that feeling which bids us 'whether we live, we live

unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'

"But there is yet another item in my list of encouragements, and that is, that the elder who is faithful in the discharge of official duty, thereby secures the respect and esteem of the church to which he belongs. This feeling of love 'from the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom,' as David has it, 'is all my delight,' is by no means to be despised or undervalued. The great ones of the world cannot obtain it; gold cannot purchase it; for it must be the spontaneous offering of the heart, and is entirely independent of adventitious circumstances. The more faithful an elder is in the performance of official trust, and the further removed from a man-fearing or time-serving spirit, the more strongly will the estimation of his worth rise in the minds of others. Far removed from this is the ephemeral popularity which lasts but for a day, whether induced by military glory, political influence, or the boon companion-

ship of the bottle; and which is indeed 'as the crackling of thorns under a pot;' the sentiment I am describing is of a more permanent nature, and is unalloyed by compunction or remorse; it is grounded on a conviction of integrity, and is that 'good name' which 'is rather to be chosen than great riches,' and that 'loving favour' that is to be preferred to 'silver and gold.'"

Herbert paused, and Neville thanked him for the cheering considerations he had presented in so animating an aspect. "But," added he, "as I am not yet among the eldership, I cannot derive that benefit from them which justly appertains to those who have already 'borne the burden and heat of the day.'"

"There you are quite mistaken, Neville. Elders will do well to ponder and review these encouragements in every stage of their progress, but they are more especially intended to allay the fears and sustain the courage of those who are just elected to the office, and may not yet have accepted the appointment. It is a crying evil, that so

many decline this sacred trust, who by self-denial and exertion might do so much good as members of session. Under a show of humility, while perhaps pride or indolence is the real motive, persons refuse to assume the yoke of service; but let them once make trial of His requirements, and they will find that 'his commandments are not grievous.' Let then a glance at the privileges I have enumerated, give you fresh courage for your arduous work, and as you are about to enrol yourself among the standard-bearers in our Zion, be strong and quit yourself like a man. As a general rule, it is a dangerous thing to hold back from commanded duty, be the province what it may. To such, the young ruler whom our Saviour loved, should be a warning not to be neglected, that the call 'Come, take up thy cross and follow me,' was disregarded; and without that subjection to Christ which he lacked, vain would be his wealth, amiability, or observance of the second table of the law. But my little children have been quiet here so long, that I am sure a good run will be of service to

them. Let us see, Nannie, if we cannot beat the rest of them in a race to that big tree." The challenge was accepted, and soon the little garden resounded with the quick step and merry laugh of childhood—happy period, too soon to give place to the cares and anxieties of after years. Would that it might, instead of being the introduction to folly and worldliness, be consecrated to His service who has said, "they that seek me early shall find me!"

CHAPTER X.

THE CLAIMS OF THE ELDERSHIP ON CHURCH MEMBERS.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake."

"I FEEL sorry to think that this will be the last evening of our pleasant conversations on the eldership, Herbert," said Mr. Neville, as the inmates of that happy house-

hold sought the usual gathering-place; "but I think it is hardly fair to put so much on the elders, and yet say nothing of the obligations of the people."

"There are few relations in life, in which the duties are not reciprocal, Neville, and this certainly is not an exception to the rule. The connection between the session and the congregation over which they are to rule is cemented by the strongest tie. The scriptural enforcement of the duty, the voluntary assumption of church membership, the sacred emblems which hallow their association with each other, and the fact, that the one is chosen by the other to be 'over them in the Lord,' to represent their interests in the ecclesiastical courts, and to co-operate with the pastor in taking care of the church of God;' these considerations should call forth the affectionate respect of every renewed heart to those who watch for their souls. But I will enter a little more into particulars, to convince you that I do not think all the duty lies on one side. First, then, the eldership has a right to

claim obedience from the people. 'Obey them that have the rule over you,' is an apostolic direction, to which he adds, 'submit yourselves.'"

"Dear Herbert," said Mabel, "I fear that will not be allowed, when even in your Presbytery there is so much declamation about church domination and sectarian exclusiveness, that it is thought a hardship to have inquiries made as to the way in which our own Boards are supported."

"Such may be the slang used in our judicatories, wife; but the churches are better taught than to follow these examples. We have little to fear from church domination, where, as in our beloved Zion, there are neither the allurements of wealth and patronage to be gained, nor the deterring influence of penal statutes to be dreaded. That the claim I advance for the session in connection with its moderator, is scriptural, few Presbyterians will deny, when the very tenor is equivalent to authority, and when the importance of order in religious matters must be felt to be as great as in merely political

affairs. In general, it shows but an unchristian spirit, to quarrel with one's church; and though we Protestants do not assert our infallibility, yet, as a general thing, a session are more likely to be right than an individual, especially when his judgment is in danger of being warped by self-estimation and prejudice. But obedience and submission do not cover the whole ground in question; the faithful elder has a right to expect that those among whom he labours will 'esteem him very highly in love, for his work's sake.' Who can refuse this tribute to the usefulness of devoted men, who spend so much of their time in the service of the Lord? and is it not rather a spontaneous feeling of the heart, than an extorted and reluctant acknowledgment of merit?"

"Among many other instances that might be mentioned," observed Mrs. Lindsay, "of the respect which a zealous discharge of official duty calls forth, two occur to my mind. One is that of an elder, who was, many years ago, occupied in teaching young ladies in Philadelphia; and his labours among his

pupils were so signally blessed, that a large proportion of them became pious while under his tuition. He is long since gone to his rest. The other elder still survives to bless the little church where his lot is cast; to pour forth those prayers which are so full of unction and of faith; and to show, in his old age, how gracefully the loss of property can be sustained, when it seems good to our heavenly Father to strip his people of what they deemed their own."

"Thank you, dear mother, for your illustrations of my assertion. Hoping, then, that the churches will not refuse the meed of affection to those who are over them in the Lord, I will proceed to state some of those symptoms of this love, which, being tangible and apparent, furnish the strongest proofs of its reality. And the first proof of love I would recommend, is a spirit of co-operation in every good work. This would prompt to liberality in the consecration of substance, to punctuality in attending the week-day meetings, to regularity in sending their children to Sabbath-schools and Bible-

classes, and to assist with their own services, if needed, in these departments. This is a day of combinations for every purpose, political, literary, or social; when will it be, that this principle will unite more closely our brethren and sisters in Christ to him, and to each other? 'Behold how these Christians love one another!' was the exclamation of Pagan enemies. Would that it might be more conspicuous among Presbyterians in our favoured era! Another proof of that love which elders might hope to receive from those who remember them that have the rule over them, is a spirit of charity and forbearance in judging of their conduct. A detracting, backbiting mode of speaking of church officers is assuredly a poor indication of that charity that thinketh no evil; nor can there be a tendency more adverse to the influence of the spirit of holiness and peace. In the trying exercise of their official functions, it is of the greatest importance that they be sustained by the confidence and good opinion of the people; and even where faults exist, these should not be wan-

tonly or needlessly exposed to the censures of an invidious world. But a third proof of love is manifested by a prayerful spirit. If Paul entreated an interest in the supplications of the Thessalonian converts, elders have still more occasion to make a similar request. How would it cheer them in their arduous charge, to know and believe that their names were presented at the mercy-seat by those whom they were called on to feed and guide in the ways of holiness. But a fourth mode of showing a people's high estimation of their ruling elders, is in assisting to maintain, or at least relieving them, if indigent."

"That is indeed giving them double honour, in a literal sense, Herbert."

"I am aware that this is an explanation of the text, given by those, who think it the best means of subverting its application to elders who rule only. But there is little fear, while the preaching elder is so badly paid, that the ruling ones would succeed, even if they laid claim to a temporal remuneration; nor would such a state of things

be at all desirable. My plea is only made in behalf of those who have been deprived of the means of sustenance, when old age or weakness has come upon them. Who, in this pitiable situation, does not merit the kindly sympathy of the more able friends of the Redeemer? And what can we think of the religion of those who refuse to minister to the necessities of their spiritual guides? Were I called upon to do, as Peter did in his day, 'to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,' when he said, 'Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth,' I should consider no truth so seasonable or so desirable to be inculcated, on that large portion of Protestant Christendom that own the Presbyterian polity, as a reverence for, and an acquiescence in, the claims of the eldership on the obedience, reverence, and love of the churches over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.

"Nor can those great and ulterior move-

ments which we all so joyously anticipate, find an organization more suited for their development and completion, than the one for which we are pleading. For they, by their very position, are like the keystone to the arch; binding preacher and people to themselves and to each other; possessing power to form an easy and effective mode of gathering in those contributions for the Lord's house, which are needful to the erection of the spiritual temple; and possessing those qualifications which are most requisite for the management of missions abroad, and church extension at home.

"Let me, therefore, dear brother, while I congratulate you on your being chosen to fill an office so important to the maintenance of order, the preservation of discipline, the sustentation of the ministry, and the carrying out of those great designs which shall herald the days of millennial glory, remind you of the need there is to look to the great Head of influences, that he would fit you for your work, enable you to magnify your office, and at last receive you with that soul-

satisfying acclaim, 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.'"

Very soon the happy party had separated. Mr. Neville, Edith, and the children, returned to their home; and as the best proof of the impressions made on his mind by the conversations here detailed, Mr. Neville accepted the office of a Ruling Elder. In this position he sought to carry out many of the hints suggested by Herbert, and finds them all work well.

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